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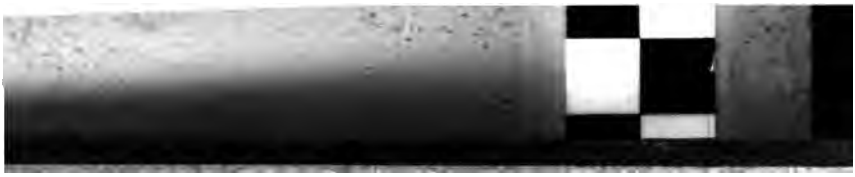
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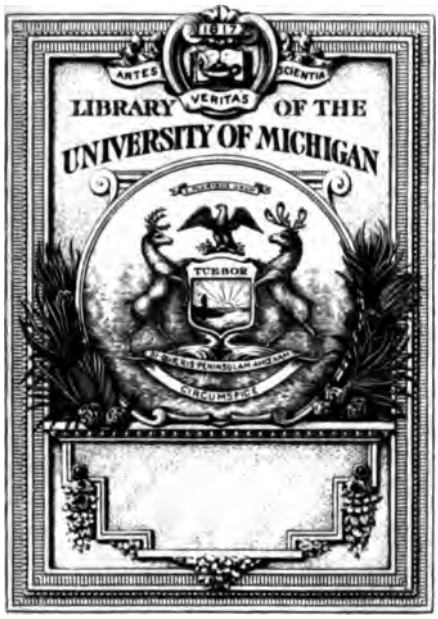
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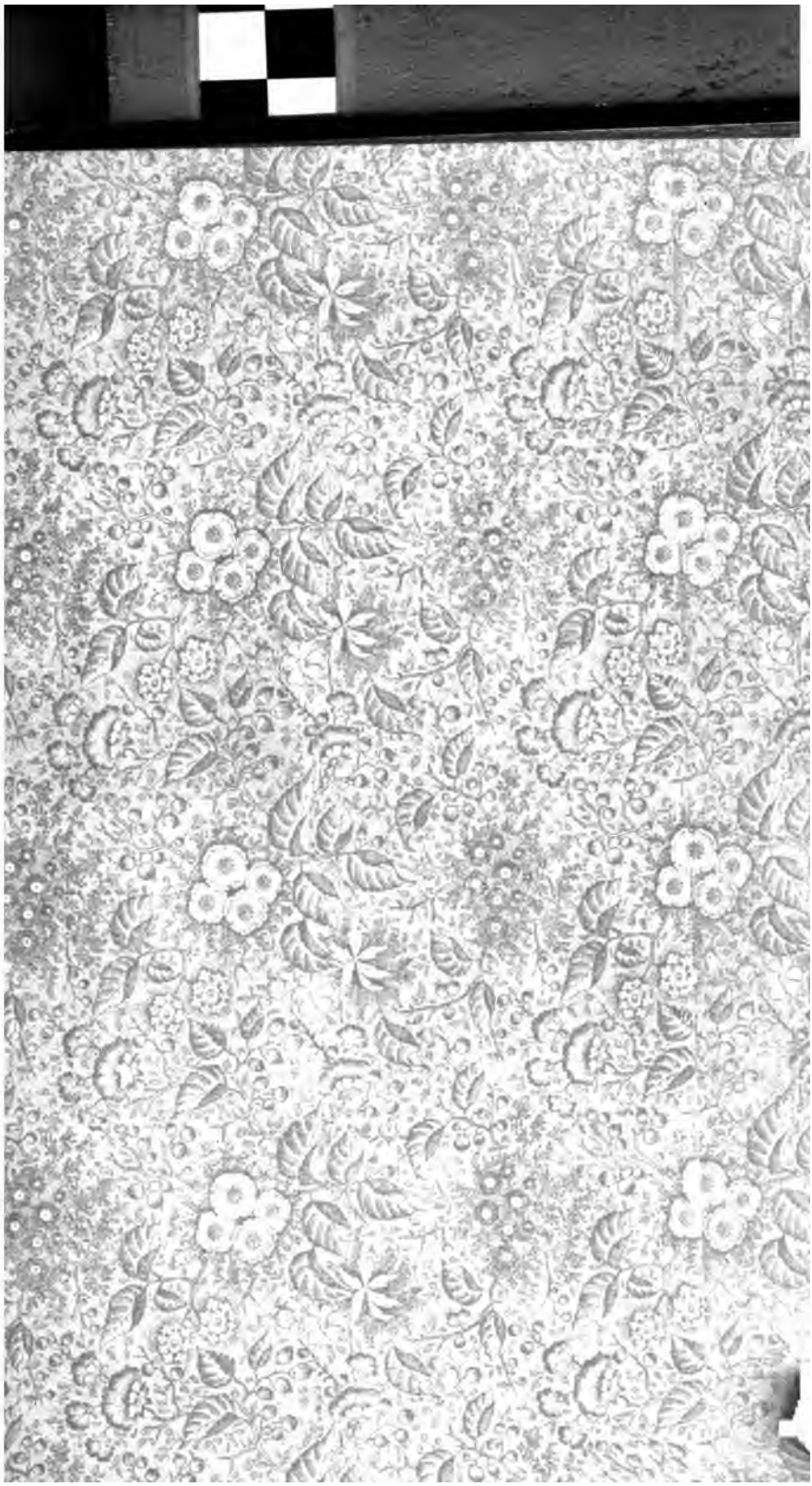
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A STUDY

OF

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

BY

LEWIS G. JANES

Πάντα δοκιμάζετε· τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε

BOSTON
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1886



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TO

MY PUPILS AND ASSOCIATES IN THE

ADULT CLASSES

CONNECTED WITH THE

SECOND UNITARIAN CHURCH,
BROOKLYN, N.Y.,

In remembrance of

the pleasant and fruitful hours which we have spent together in the search for that

IDEAL TRUTH

which is dearer to us than any faulty expression in the symbols of an imperfect language,

I DEDICATE

this little book.

Jan. 19, 1886.

PREFACE.

I TAKE great pleasure in recommending Dr. Janes's *Primitive Christianity* to the community at large. One of the most satisfactory aspects of my Brooklyn pastorate has been the work of Dr. Janes in connection with an adult class on Sundays, and the evening class to which he refers in his introduction. In both of these connections, he has shown a remarkable faculty for laborious study and intelligent and persuasive exposition. The chapters herewith presented were originally prepared for lectures to the evening class. They proved themselves entirely equal to the purpose for which they were designed, conveying definite information and inciting vigorous debate. The origin of these lectures, in the exigencies of class instruction, suggests the hope that they will be found widely useful in churches and elsewhere for the purposes of such instruction. Their topical arrangement will be a great advantage to the class and teacher using them.

At the same time, they are deserving of a more general currency. They are a wonderfully clear



6-26-1933

and strong expression of the best results of the higher criticism of the New Testament, and the origins of Christianity. They are no mere compilation, but the outcome of an independent mind working freely upon a great mass of materials, to which few, except the professional scholar, can give the attention they deserve. If I am not mistaken, Dr. Janes has brought to these materials a singularly just and patient mind, which has saved him from 'the falsehood of extremes,' and enabled him 'to see things as they are.' It is, for me, an admirable feature of his book that it does not apprehend the life of Jesus and the early Christians as any merely historical problem, but demands at every step to know what there is here to help us in the storm and stress of our own time's Philosophy, and Ethics, and Sociology, and Religion. If the various questions which are now so serious and engrossing can be met in such a spirit as my friend has shown within the compass of his little book, that

> 'bridal-dawn of thunder-peals,
> Which all the past of time reveals,
> Wherever Thought has wedded Fact,'

will not be long delayed, nor anything but welcome when it comes.

JOHN W. CHADWICK.

BROOKLYN, N.Y., Dec. 26, 1885.





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INTRODUCTION.

THE questions involved in the study of the origins of Christianity and the earliest phases of its development are ordinarily supposed to lie within the exclusive province of the professional theologian. It is freely intimated that a layman has no business to meddle with them. The theologian, having thus monopolized the treatment of these important subjects, is generally careful to avoid any such discussion of them as may tend to throw doubt upon the currently accepted doctrines of the divine origin and infallible truth of the Christian system.

When, by chance, a Christian minister, having a mind unwarped by theological bias and a sublimer confidence in the sacredness of truth and the method of free discussion than, unhappily, is usual, dares to transgress the bounds of custom, and gives to the public the plain facts of history and the results of the critical judgment of the best and most reverent scholars upon these topics, he does but demonstrate by his experience that intellectual liberty is rarely possible within sectarian boundaries, even though the body with which he communes may be the most cultured and liberal of

all the sects,—may assume indeed to be no sect, but the church universal.

As far as the enlightenment of the public is involved in the event, it does not seem to matter much whether the voice of truth is silenced by the rack and thumb-screw, as of yore, or by the friendly request of an assistant bishop, as at the present day. Silenced it is for the moment, and that effectually; while in the ears of the eagerly waiting people rings the old-time query, never more forceful or pertinent than to-day, Why seek ye not, even of yourselves, what is true?

In this spirit of single-minded search for the truth, it is proposed to investigate the origins of Christianity, the character and validity of the New Testament literature, and the different phases of custom and belief which existed in the earliest Christian communities. The writer perhaps owes it to his readers to inform them that his work was commenced and prosecuted with no original purpose or expectation of publication, and that it embodies the results of some years of careful study in connection with his duties as teacher of an advanced class of Sunday-school pupils. The papers herein collected were originally prepared and delivered as a course of lectures before an Association* engaged in the systematic study of the world's great religions. Their publication is due solely to the cordial appreciation and earnestly expressed desire of those who listened to their delivery. Their original form will not be essentially

*The Association for Moral and Spiritual Education, Brooklyn, N.Y.

modified; but sub-titles and explanatory notes will be inserted for the convenience of the general reader, and a carefully prepared topical index will, it is believed, add to the usefulness of the lectures.

It is hoped that the reader will unite with us in the attempt to hold our educational and inherited prejudices and prepossessions, as far as possible, in abeyance, bearing in mind that maxim of Confucius which affirms that "the superior man, in the world, does not set himself either for anything or against anything: what is *right* he will follow." The sense of this maxim is rendered more tersely, if less unequivocally, by Paul, in the text which may be rendered: "Test all things thoroughly, and hold fast to that which is morally beautiful."

Commencing our investigation with an examination of the local environment of the earliest phase of Christianity, involved in the political, social, and religious condition of Palestine in the Roman period, we will next consider the state of society and religion in the Roman Empire outside of Palestine,—that fruitful ground into which the earliest seeds of Christian thought and life were transplanted. Thereafter, we will investigate the sources of our information concerning the life and teachings of Jesus, and the different stages of the evolution of the new religion, up to the time of its secular triumph.

The literature bearing upon these topics is already enormous, and is expanding with every added year. The work involved in the preparation of these lectures has therefore not been inconsiderable: it is much greater, indeed, than the

somewhat meagre results may appear to indicate. The greatest care has been taken to insure accuracy in regard to all statements of fact, reliance having been placed only on authorities of recognized weight and impartiality. For the conclusions and deductions from ascertained historical facts, herein set forth, no one is responsible save the writer, who commits them to the candid judgment of the unbiassed reader, trusting that they may serve a good, if humble, purpose toward the discovery of truth and the consequent enfranchisement of mankind from superstition and theological bondage.



I.

PALESTINE IN THE ROMAN PERIOD.

A TRITE subject, but one of supreme interest and importance, is that to which we are to devote our attention,—the Origin and Growth of Christianity. Of making books upon this topic there has been no end. It can hardly be anticipated that the present effort will add anything to the information of those unprejudiced investigators whose inclination and leisure have permitted them to make acquaintance with the current literature bearing upon this question in all its different relations. These, however, are of necessity the few: the present lectures are intended for others,—for those whom lack of time has prevented from keeping pace with the growth of a literature whose bulk is already portentous.

Treating the topics involved in this study from the stand-point of sympathetic rationalism, and, in accordance with the latest results of critical and exegetical research, regarding Christianity as a product of natural evolution from the existing environment, with its inheritance of past influences and traditions, the attempt will be made to group together and present as clearly and consistently as possible the salient points in each division of the

subject in such a brief and succinct form that the reader may readily retain them in his memory, and find the theme, notwithstanding its familiarity, not devoid of interest or unworthy of his serious attention.

From the Captivity to the Roman Period.*

Palestine, in the generations immediately preceding the birth of Jesus,—a land less in extent than the State of New Hampshire,—from its location, the character of its people, and the peculiarities of their national religion, became the seat of a remarkable series of political and social events. The period of the ancient Hebraism, interrupted in its development by the dispersion of the Northern tribes and the Babylonian captivity of the Southern tribes, had long since passed. Persia and Chaldea had bestowed upon Israel their gifts of the belief in a future life and a bodily resurrection. The Persian conception of the speedy destruction of the world by fire and the coming of a supernatural saviour had penetrated the popular mind of Judaism, and modified its growing Messianic expectation. Satan, the old time messenger and servant of Yahweh, had been endowed with the attributes of the Persian Ahriman, thus becoming the devil of the New Testament;† and the Chaldean superstition of

*As it is our purpose hereafter to show the natural relation of the thought and life of Jesus to his social and intellectual environment, the material for this lecture has accordingly been drawn wholly from other than New Testament sources.

†The word "devil" is of Aryan origin, and is not found at all in the Old Testament.



active demoniacal influences in human affairs, while it was rejected by the cultivated classes, had obtained a strong hold upon the credulity of the common people.

The Persian protectorate, cut short by the conquests of Alexander the Great, had been succeeded by the period of Greek domination, which in turn was interrupted by the successful issue of the Maccabæan struggle for freedom, followed by a century of independence and comparative prosperity under the leadership of the descendants of Judas Maccabæus. Success, however, as often happens, brought corruption in its wake; and the later Asmonean leaders were no longer animated by the resolute and incorruptible patriotism which spurred on their ancestors in the struggle for liberty. For many years, the country was disturbed by political dissensions, which finally wrought the overthrow of the independent Commonwealth.

During all this period of strife, the more faithful adherents of Judaism, who held to the old theocratic conception of Israel, kept aloof from political strife, acknowledging Yahweh* as their only King and Ruler, and submitting to the authority of their superiors with silent but indignant protest. They left the petty dissensions of politics to the holders and seekers for office, who then, as now, were abundantly able to create a popular commotion with little assistance from the substantial and thinking classes of the people.

*The name "Yahweh" will be used throughout these lectures instead of the familiar "Jehovah," as expressing more accurately the correct orthography and pronunciation of the word.

Occasions of Roman Interference.

About the year 69 B.C., a contest for the throne arose between two Asmonean pretenders, John Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. To decide the dispute, five years later, Scaulus, the Roman commander in Syria, was appealed to as an arbitrator. He assigned the throne to Aristobulus; but, in the following year, Pompey the Great, who was then at the head of affairs in Rome, annulled the act of Scaulus, transferred the regal office to Hyrcanus, and carried Aristobulus a captive to Rome, where, with his two daughters and his son Absalom, he graced the public triumph of the great Roman general, in the year 61 B.C. Four years later, Alexander, another son of Aristobulus, raised an insurrection in Palestine; and, in the year 54 B.C., Crassus, then the Roman commander in Syria, taking advantage of the turbulence incited by these dissensions, took possession of the city of Jerusalem with his army, and shocked the entire religious community by committing the sacrilege of entering and plundering the temple.

On the advent of Julius Cæsar to supreme power, soon after this event, the fortunes of the Jews improved. He granted them many privileges, and relieved them from oppressive exactions, both in Rome, where a colony had existed since the time of Pompey, and in their native country. Aristobulus having been poisoned in Rome at the instigation of the party of Pompey, and his son Alexander having been beheaded, Cæsar recognized Hyrcanus as High Priest and bestowed upon him the title of Prince, making him ruler



of Palestine under the protection of the empire. A few years later, in 44 B.C., Herod, a prince of Idumea or Edom,—the ancient hereditary rival and foe of Israel,—having married the daughter of Hyrcanus, was made tetrarch or governor of the country under his father-in-law.

In the year 40 B.C., the Parthians, who had revolted and overthrown the Seleucidæ,—the successors of Alexander the Great in the eastern provinces,—and had maintained thus far an effective resistance against the Roman power, invaded Judea in alliance with Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus, and seated him upon the throne, carrying Hyrcanus to Persia, a prisoner. About the same time, the Roman Senate bestowed the kingdom upon Herod; and in the year 37 B.C., by the aid of Mark Antony, he stormed Jerusalem, captured the Holy City, expelled the Parthian invaders, and assumed the regal power. Thus, the patriotic Jews were at last subjected to the unexampled degradation and ignominy of beholding an accursed Edomite seated upon the throne of David.

The Sects: the Pharisees and Sadducees.

During this period of political dissension, the people were also rent by religious disputes between the rival sects, the Pharisees and Sadducees. The latter have sometimes erroneously been termed the Liberals of Judaism. They have been regarded as innovators upon the ancient customs and beliefs of their people. In their leading doctrines, on the contrary, they were pre eminently the represen-

tatives of the historic life and thought of Israel. They were the traditional custodians of the priestly office and emoluments; constituting, as it were, an ancient order of hereditary nobility.

The Asmonean rulers were originally in sympathy with the growing religious life of the people. They had attained their leadership through their pre-eminent merits and patriotism and with the popular support. But, not unnaturally, they were rejoiced when they began to find favor in the eyes of the ancient order of nobility. Mutual interests, apart from the life and thought of the people, cemented a cordial bond of sympathy between them. The Sadducees, holding themselves superior to the masses by reason of their priestly functions, and puffed up by their alliance with the ruling house, grew more and more conservative and narrow-minded. They sought to build up a hierarchy, to identify the entire range of religious duties with themselves and their official position. "Thus gradually," says Rabbi Geiger, a learned Jewish historian, "they changed their position. Instead of remaining the servants and ministers of religion, they made religion their servant." *

The germs of a priestly order which formed the nucleus of this sect doubtless existed from a period long antedating the Babylonian captivity, but the sect as it appeared in the generations approaching the advent of Christianity was unknown to the Old Testament writings. Its origin

*_Judaism and its History_, by Rabbi Geiger, which see for an admirable account of the Jewish sects.



is obscure, and the meaning of its designation uncertain.* The sect of the Pharisees was unknown prior to the Maccabæan era, about 165 B.C. In opposition to the priestly assumptions of the Sadducees, their opponents held that all the people should be regarded as sanctified in the service of Yahweh, all alike should be elevated to a condition of priestly holiness. Accordingly, they adopted strict rules of life, and insisted upon the formal observance of the rites of their religion in order to approximate as nearly as possible to the special requirements of the priestly office.

The Sadducees naturally magnified the temple worship, in which they were chiefly interested, and advocated strict conformity to the letter of the law,—the *Thorah*. The Pharisees were the leading supporters of the synagogue, an institution which arose during the Maccabæan period. They proclaimed the superior sanctity of the oral law or tradition, which they attributed also to Moses, and advocated the right of all to be teachers and interpreters of the *Thorah*. Public prayers, daily ablutions, the consecration of the daily meals, were characteristic Pharisaic observances, the intent of which was to render every man, as nearly as possible, a priest. The scribes, who traced their origin to the time of Ezra,† were the copyists, readers, and commentators on the law in the synagogues, and were almost exclusively drawn from the sect of the Pharisees. They have sometimes

*Some derive the word *Sadducee* from the name of one Zadok or Sadoq, a priest; others, from a word said to mean "the wise."

† *Circum* 444 B.C.

erroneously been regarded as constituting a separate sect by themselves.

The Sadducees adopted the aristocratic designations of "sons of the families of rank" and "sons of the high priests." The Pharisees were known as "separatists," "the learned," sometimes even "the people." Fraternizing with the main body of the populace, they accepted the popular doctrines of a future life, a bodily resurrection, and the coming of a personal Messiah. They declared that the exclusive priesthood would go down, the people would be emancipated, a descendant of the house of David would arise and reign over them, the servant and representative of Yahweh. Many of them anticipated the miraculous destruction of the existing world and society, and the establishment of a perpetual kingdom of God, a regenerated world in the glories and joys of which all true believers would participate. The Sadducees, on the contrary, including, it is said, twenty thousand priests living in gluttony and luxury in Jerusalem alone, satisfied with their power and emoluments, contented with the present life, wishing for no change, repudiated the notions of a resurrection and a future existence as unwarranted by the teachings of the law, and rejected the doctrine of the personal Messiahship.

Jewish Monasticism: the Essenes.

About a century before the Christian era there arose in Palestine the small monastic sect of the Essenes.* During the reign of Herod, it is esti-

*Our information concerning the Essenes is derived mainly from the works of Flavius Josephus.



mated that they numbered about four thousand ascetics or "come-outers," withdrawn from among the Pharisees, and carrying to an extreme the Pharisaic doctrine of separatism. Members were received into this order by a solemn ceremonial of initiation, which included the rite of immersion. They took vows of chastity and seclusion, performed frequent ceremonial ablutions, refused to make sacrificial offerings at the temple, were prohibited from taking oaths, and held all their property in common. They had no fixed dwelling-places, but appointed some of their members or sympathizers in every considerable town or city to entertain them as they journeyed through in the course of their itinerant wanderings. They had certain conventual establishments in the wilderness near the Jordan, in the neighborhood of which they practised husbandry during the intervals of their journeyings and religious exercises. They were extreme formalists, placing greater importance even than the Pharisees upon the performance of all the minutiæ of their religious observances. They wore a peculiar white costume and a sacred girdle. They carefully preserved and often repeated the names of the angels. They venerated as sacred the rays of light, and turned toward the sun to pray.

The Essenes were as fatalistic in their beliefs as the Mohammedans. Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected the doctrine of a bodily resurrection, and believed in a spiritual immortality for both the righteous and evil-doers. They interpreted many passages of Scripture allegorically in defence of

their peculiar doctrines. By the poor, they were known as skilful physicians; and they were popularly reputed to be remarkable prophets. Many of their customs and beliefs, as well as those of the Pharisees, bear marked evidences of Persian or Zoroastrian origin. Some modern writers have attempted to trace their monastic habits and ascetic tendencies to the influence of Buddhism, but no certain or probable contact of this sect with the religion of Sakya-Muni has yet been clearly demonstrated. They appear, on the contrary, to have originated in Palestine by a natural evolution out of Pharisaic Judaism. Some writers have attempted to identify them with the Therapeutæ, represented to have been a monastic sect or order of itinerant physicians which arose in Egypt at about this period; but our information concerning them is not sufficiently trustworthy to enable us to affirm even their existence as a fact beyond dispute.*

Though we cannot assert any probable connection between the doctrines of any of the Jewish sects and those of Buddhism, it is manifest that other Eastern notions, chiefly of Zoroastrian origin, were gradually creeping into the thought and faith of the people of Israel. Besides the more prominent beliefs of this character, to which allusion has already been made, ideas were probably already working in the Hebrew mind, which subsequently took form in the mystical and esoteric

*The earliest accounts of the Therapeutæ appear in a work attributed to Philo, but which is of doubtful authenticity. It is probably of much later date, and its testimony must be regarded as untrustworthy. See Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, Vol. III.

doctrines of the Kabbala,* the earliest account of which we find in a work attributed by current Jewish tradition to Rabbi Akiba, who wrote about 120 A.D., but which, in reality, was probably written several centuries later. The Oriental doctrine of creation by Emanation was certainly current at this time; and the Aramaic version of the Scriptures, which was commonly used in the synagogues, designated God by the term *Memra*, or the "Word," whenever it was desired to separate him in thought from the visible creation.†

The Kanaim, or Zealots.

Out of the long oppression of the Jews by foreign rulers and the indignities offered to their religion, culminating in the desecration of the sacred temple of Yahweh, grew the party of the Kanaim, or Zealots. Its members were patriots whose zeal for their ancestral faith impelled them to renounce all foreign domination, and to strive to break the bonds of the oppressor by the force of arms. The Kanaim held unswervingly to the ancient theocratic character of the Commonwealth. "There is but one kingdom: it is the heavenly kingdom,—the kingdom of God." This was the motto of the Zealot. "Thou shalt make no graven image" was the command of the *Thorah*. To touch a piece of money with the image of the

* Hebrew "tradition," often spelled "Cabbala."

† The "Targums," or Aramaic versions of the Old Testament writings, were at this time probably oral. The Targum of Onkelos, the first of the written Targums, dates from the second century o our era. See the able discussion of this question in "Quotations in the New Testament," by Prof. Crawford Howell Toy, of Harvard University.

Roman emperor on it was therefore a sin in his eyes. Yahweh only was king. To pay taxes to a foreigner, the representative of false gods and an alien religion, was therefore a crime. To make contracts under the seal of the Roman officials was blasphemy. "How can you pretend to be pious?" said one of this sect to a leading Pharisee. "You write in contracts the name of the ruler by the side of that of Moses, beginning 'In the year of the Emperor,' and concluding 'According to the Law of Moses and Israel.' If the name of the unbeliever is in this way incorporated into contracts, can you call that piety?"

This uncompromising patriotism and resolute adherence to the old faith of Israel did not fail to meet with a response in the hearts of the people. Associations were formed, which had for their object the delivery of the people from the foreign yoke; and insurrections were frequent from the time of Judah of Gaulonitis, in the generation before Christ, to that of Bar-Cochba, more than a century later, who was accepted as the true Messiah by a large number of the people, including some of the leading Rabbis of the day. During this period, it is said that more than fifty leaders arose among the Jews, claiming the Messianic office, each of whom had a considerable popular following.

Sectional Characteristics: Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.

Galilee appears to have been the fountain-head of these insurrectionary movements. The Galileans were a mixed race, having intermarried with

the inhabitants of the surrounding neighborhood after the deportation of the northern tribes by the Assyrians. They were regarded with suspicion and contempt by the more conservative classes who inhabited Judea, and came under the direct influence of the government and the priestly party of the Sadducees who gathered around the temple as the centre of their worship and the chief citadel of their faith. This region was often called "Galilee of the Gentiles" by the blue-blooded Jews of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Galileans strenuously maintained their rights as children of Abraham, and were strict in their allegiance to the law and the temple at Jerusalem. Like the Jews of Judea, they despised their neighbors, the Samaritans, whose blood was even less pure than their own, and who had established a new temple on Mt. Gerizim, breaking loose entirely from all allegiance to the aristocratic element of Jerusalem and Judea. So bitter was the feeling against the Samaritans that it was customary for travellers between Galilee and Judea to avoid Samaria, which lay in the direct route, by crossing over to the east of the Jordan.

Judah of Gaulonitis, himself a native of Galilee or an adjacent district, may be regarded as the founder of the sect of the Zealots. He taught that to obey the foreign ruler, or in any way depart from the original theocratic constitution of Israel or to compromise in the least degree with the secular power, was rebellion against the sacred law of Yahweh. Rising in insurrection with a considerable following in the generation before

the birth of Jesus, after a severe struggle he was defeated, captured, and crucified. His followers were scattered and disarmed, but the spirit which animated them was not thereby quelled. A generation later, John of Giscala, a descendant of Judah, became the leader of another rebellion which likewise came to a disastrous end. Theudas, a third sectarian leader, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, also hailed from Galilee. He met with some local and temporary success, and had many enthusiastic followers, but finally succumbed to the fate of his predecessors. The martyrdom of these leaders of the Kanaim by crucifixion only served to perpetuate their memories and give currency to their revolutionary sentiments, and thus added fuel to the patriotic flame which was glowing in the hearts of the people.

The Revival of Prophecy: John the Baptist.

From among the less cultivated classes there also arose certain religious enthusiasts claiming the office and assuming the characteristic garb of the Hebrew prophets. They announced the speedy destruction of the existing order of society, and the coming of the kingdom of heaven through supernatural intervention. The popular conception of the heavenly kingdom involved the universal triumph and control of the Jewish theocracy, the annihilation of its enemies, and the re-establishment of united Israel, with a descendant of the house of David to rule over them as the servant and representative of Yahweh. Many antici-

pated the return of the prophet Isaiah in person, as the herald of Israel's better day. John the Baptist, the most noteworthy of the latter-day prophets, was undoubtedly an historical personage. A brief sketch of his career is given us by Josephus, in passages of unchallenged authenticity. The account harmonizes in the main with the conception of the man which we derive from the familiar New Testament description, and presents a graphic suggestion of the effect of his impassioned exhortations upon his followers. Josephus also alludes to one Banus, possibly a leader of the Essenes, who immersed his disciples in the Jordan river. At a later day, one Jesus, a Judean Jew, uttered stern warnings and foreboding prophecies of evil to Jerusalem during its investment by Titus, prior to its final destruction in the year 70 B.C. These leaders drew to themselves chiefly the less educated Pharisees and the so-called "people of the land," a large class of mixed parentage, whose poverty and menial occupations forbade a strict observance of the minutiæ of Pharisaic ritualism, though their sympathies and associations were generally with this most numerous and popular sect.

Growth of the Messianic Idea.

Out of all this turmoil and conflict of the sects, these disputes about idle formalities of ritualistic observance and textual interpretations, one doctrine grew steadily into ever greater prominence in the hearts and hopes of the people,—the belief in a coming Deliverer, "the anointed of Yahweh,"

—the Messiah. Out of the vague natural hope of the earlier time for the reunion of a scattered and divided people under a prince of the house of David had grown a strong belief that a leader would be raised up to them, sustained by the supernatural power of Yahweh, who would put an end to the existing social order, and establish anew the kingdom of God on earth. The Persian notions of a bodily resurrection and a millennial era of earthly prosperity, to be heralded by the coming of Sosiosch, "the conquering Saviour," had penetrated the faith of Judaism, and intensified and transformed the popular conception of the Messianic character. We would doubtless err greatly, if we supposed that any single, consistent picture of the coming Saviour was present to the minds of all classes. The better educated of the Pharisees probably still held the faith of the great prophets of the captivity, which regarded Israel itself as the Messiah of the nations, the leader of the world out of polytheism and idolatry to a knowledge of Yahweh as the one true God, and the conception of righteousness as his most faithful and acceptable service. The popular expectation, however, looked for a personal deliverer, either in the character of a great military chieftain like David, who would destroy the enemies of Israel with the weapons of natural warfare, or in that of a chosen servant of Yahweh, endowed with supernatural powers, who would overcome the nations by the might of the Eternal, and herald the appearance of the everlasting kingdom.



Liberal and Conservative Pharisees.—Hillel.

In times like these there appear not only men like these fanatical chieftains who fomented insurrection, but also leaders by right of moral and intellectual superiority, who voice the higher conceptions of truth as they appear to the more intelligent classes, and who are yet free from that purblind conservatism and time-serving subservience to rulers, which characterized the educated Sadducees. Such a man was Rabbi Hillel, born about ninety years before Jesus, and dying, it is said, at the full age of one hundred years, when the founder of Christianity was about ten years old. Hillel was a liberal Pharisee, the leader of one of the two great parties into which the popular sect was divided. Such were his services to Judaism that the Talmud declares, "After the time of Ezra, the law came into oblivion; but Hillel established it anew."

Hillel was a very poor youth, but ardently ambitious to learn. It is related of him that, being unable to pay the small fee for admission to the lecture-room of Shammaya and Abtalyon, he climbed up to the window in order to hear the discourses of these eminent teachers. The night was unusually cold; and he lay there, benumbed, until the snowflakes, which were falling thick and fast, covered him entirely. Stiffened with cold and sleet, he passed the whole night in this perilous position. In the morning, when the obstruction to the window was perceived, he was discovered almost dead from exposure. He was taken

into the house, restored to consciousness with great difficulty, and thenceforth, to reward his ardor for learning, instruction was bestowed upon him gratuitously.

The Character of Hillel's Teaching: the Golden Rule.

A proselyte once came to Shammai, a distinguished leader of the more conservative party of the Pharisees,—the contemporary and rival of Hillel,—and desired to be initiated into Judaism, provided he could be instructed in its precepts within the time during which he could stand upon one foot. Shammai repulsed him harshly as a trifler unworthy of a serious response. On making a similar application to Hillel, however, he received this reply: "My son, listen. The essence of Judaism is, Whatever is displeasing unto thee do not do unto others.* This is the foundation and root of Judaism: all else is commentary. Go, and learn." Won by the paternal kindness and "sweet reasonableness" of the teacher, this man speedily became a convert to the faith.

Hillel inculcated the belief in the merciful and fatherly character of God, encouraged the cultivation of an unselfish desire for the welfare of others, taught the necessity and honorable nature of useful labor, and advocated a wise liberality in adjusting the harsher features of the law to the existing

* It is noteworthy that the golden rule is given negatively in the recently discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," a document of very early date, perhaps older than either of our canonical Gospels. Confucius also gave it in this negative form.



requirements of society. He believed that the irreclaimably evil would suffer eternal punishment; but, in regard to those whose conduct was an intermixture of good and evil, he said, "He who is abundant in mercy will sink the scale unto mercy."

Shammai and his disciples were the Mallocks of their day, preachers of the pessimistic philosophy that life is not worth living. "It is far better for men not to be born than to be born," they said. But Hillel replied: "Well, we *are* born. Therefore, let us be thoroughly alive, and examine well our actions." "Energetically seize life," was his motto. "Why do you make changes and innovations?" his opponents asked. "If I work not myself," he replied, "who will work for me? But, if I work for myself alone, what am I then? Is it for myself that I desire what is good, or is it not rather the whole people who require to be quickened?"

The old Jewish law made every seventh year a year of release, and all debts previously contracted and not paid were then cancelled and forgiven. When trade increased and men borrowed money, not merely from personal necessity, but for business purposes, this provision caused much hardship and inconvenience. Hillel declared that this must be remedied, and that thereafter contracts might be made with the express provision that the year of release should not cancel the debt. "But this is in violation of Holy Writ," said his opponents. "It may be," said Hillel; "but, if we cling to the letter, all morality will be lost. Whether anything be written or not, the life decides." In

rebuke of ascetics like the Essenes, and of extreme formalists among the Pharisees, he said: "Do not seclude thyself from thy fellow-men. Do not pretend to be pre-eminently pious. To forsake others as renegades and bask in the sunlight of exclusive piety is immoral." It is evident that the great rabbi was no advocate of a merely superficial system of morality or religious observance.

Hillel was wont to spend much time in meditation and study, and was regular in his attendance at the synagogue. One day he left the sacred edifice hastily after the lesson for the day, excusing himself by the plea that he must attend upon a dear guest at his home. His disciples asked him, "Who is this dear guest whom thou entertainest?" "That guest," he replied, "is my own soul. During my intercourse with the world, it must be pushed back; but, nevertheless, it claims its right." Although liberal in his interpretation of the law, Hillel was, nevertheless, a Pharisee, advocating strict adherence to the usual formalities of religion, unless they were in manifest conflict with the welfare and happiness of man, whom they were intended to serve. He kept the seventh day as commanded in the law, but also taught that all days should be deemed equally holy, and consecrated to God's service by clean and righteous actions. When Shammai found anything particularly excellent in his studies, he said, "Let it be preserved for the Sabbath." Hillel said: "Praised be God from day to day. *This* is a day on which I may rejoice in God's goodness: another also will afford it."

Such was the teaching of this reformer among the Pharisees, the most eminent Jew of the generation before the birth of Jesus. Possibly, the young Galilean peasant may have sat at the feet of the aged teacher, and learned lessons of liberality and wisdom. In all probability, he often listened to these teachings as they passed from one to another, and were repeated in the synagogues, where they constituted at length a part of that oral law which was ultimately recorded and preserved to us in the Talmud.* We may well believe that these doctrines of Hillel helped to inspire the humane and tender counsels of the founder of Christianity.

The Languages of Palestine.

The popular language of Palestine at the advent of Christianity was the Syro-Chaldaic, or Aramaic, a mixed Semitic tongue which superseded the ancient Hebrew in which the Old Testament was written, subsequent to the Babylonian captivity. It is probable that neither Jesus nor any of his immediate disciples could speak or write in any other language. Greek had become the language of polite society and the official tongue throughout the Roman Empire, and was probably known to the leading scholars in Jerusalem; although Josephus, who spoke and wrote in Greek nearly a century after the birth of Jesus, refers to it as "an alien and strange tongue," and affirms that, during the siege of Jerusalem, he alone was able to act as

*See article on the Talmud by Emanuel Deutsch (*Literary Remains*).

interpreter between the besieged inhabitants and the Greek-speaking commanders of the Roman army. The study of Greek or any foreign tongue was discouraged by the rabbis, who desired to preserve the minds of the people as free as possible from the contamination of foreign religious and philosophical ideas. "It is written," said one of these Hebrew teachers, "'Thou shalt meditate on the law day and night.' Find me an hour which is neither day nor night, and in that you may study Greek." *

Education among the Jews.

Josephus declares that the education of the young was the first object of solicitude among the Jews. The Talmud re-echoes this sentiment, and preserves to us the fine saying, "The world is saved by the breath of school-children." We would greatly err, however, if we supposed that the education of the Jewish youth at this period embraced any general or comprehensive course of studies. Neither science nor letters formed any part of their curriculum. By education was understood, simply, instruction in the law of Moses and the learning by heart of the Psalms and certain passages from the prophetical writings. To this was added the oral commentary of the rabbis, which often tended to obscure rather than to illuminate the real meaning of the Scriptures. The opposition to anything like what we understand

* Greek words, however, were entering into the corrupt Aramaic which constituted the popular dialect. Several such are found in the Book of Daniel, written about 165 B.C. The word *Synagogue* is also of Greek origin.

by the term secular education, or even to a system as universal and comprehensive as that which the Greek and Roman youth enjoyed, was universal and exceedingly bitter. Strikingly similar prejudices in regard to education still prevail in the East, even among scholarly and thinking minds, as we have recently seen illustrated in the attitude of the eloquent teacher of the Brahmo-Somaj of India, Babu Protap Chunder Mozoomdar.

The Jewish prejudice against graven images, embodied in a commandment of the decalogue, operated to prevent any general education of the people in painting, sculpture, and the fine arts. This prejudice doubtless arose naturally out of the perception of the immoralities connected with many forms of idolatrous worship among the heathen. The erection of the Roman standards, with the eagles and insignia of the Emperor, at the gates of Jerusalem and before the sacred temple, was the occasion of violent outbursts of popular fury; and the current worship of the emperor or his statues enforced throughout the other Roman provinces was steadily and fearlessly repelled by all classes of the Jews.

Current Peculiarities of the Synagogue Service.

In the services of the synagogue, the Psalms were chanted, and their language was familiar to all the people. The prophets, especially Isaiah, and the Apocalypse of Daniel, were frequently read; and many passages were interpreted, as in the current Christian exegesis, to refer to the com-

ing of the Messianic kingdom. With the lapse of time, the services in the synagogue and temple were becoming somewhat less free and spontaneous than they had formerly been. A stated ritual, in accordance with the tendency of the Pharisaic formalism of the time, took the place of the original simplicity and spontaneity of the synagogue service. Some of the prayers in use in the synagogues in these early periods have been preserved to us in the writings of the rabbis. They contain such familiar expressions as these,—as familiar, doubtless, to the ears of the youthful Jesus as to our own:—

"Our Father, who art in heaven, proclaim the unity of thy name, and establish thy kingdom perpetually."

"Let us not fall into the power of sin, transgression, or iniquity, and lead us not into temptation." . . .

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, and the majesty."

"Our Father who art in heaven: thy will be done on high. . . . Do whatsoever seemeth good in thy sight. Give me only bread to eat, and raiment to put on. Forgive, O Lord, those who have this day offended thee."

Prof. Toy, in his interesting study* recently published, has shown us how deeply the thought and phraseology of Jesus were rooted in the language of the Old Testament. The careful student can hardly fail to recognize the fact that it is not necessary to go beyond the boundaries of Palestine to account for the entire groundwork of the teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth, as it is em-

* *Quotations in the New Testament*, by Prof. C. H. Toy, of Harvard Divinity School.



bodied in the Triple Tradition of the Synoptical Gospels.

Summary and Conclusion.

A land barren by nature save the long, green meadows between the highlands and the sea-coast, and save also the northern province of Galilee at certain seasons, whose fields and meadows were brightened with a myriad flowers,—redeemed in part from its natural sterility under the impulse of the potent necessities of its inhabitants, until its terraced hill-sides were beautified by groves of olive-trees, pomegranates, and clustering vineyards, —a little land, isolated by nature, yet by its position made the highway between the great nations of antiquity; a people of warm southern temperament and Semitic intensity of religious devotion, cherishing in their hearts the lofty conception of the unity of God, though narrowed by the exclusiveness of their education and life; a people divided into various sects upon the great problems of the reality of a future life, and of duty in reference to obedience to the mandates of a foreign ruler; a people cherishing the memories of a former greatness due, as they thought, to the might and favor of Yahweh their God, whose chosen nation they regarded themselves, and hoping for, believing in, a coming Deliverer anointed to do his work; a people full of lofty sentiment, of narrow but intense religious aspirations, writhing under the oppression of a hated alien ruler whose power they were impotent to undermine,— such a land, such a people, were Palestine and the

Jews nineteen hundred years ago. To such an environment and heritage of social and religious ideas was born the peasant boy of Galilee whom Christendom to-day worships as the incarnate Deity. Bearing in mind these facts in contemporaneous history, and that wonderful provision of nature whereby the finer elements of a hundred generations sometimes combine in a single fortunate organization, born in the fulness of time, may we not expect to discover that the fruit upon the vine in autumn is not a more natural and inevitable result of that universal providence which is manifested in the working of all eternal and immutable laws than was the appearance, character, and teaching of the Nazarene Prophet in his time and among these, his people? Such, I believe, will be your unbiassed verdict, when we have considered together the nature of his teaching and the circumstances of his environment.



II.

SOCIETY AND RELIGION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

At the advent of Christianity, the civilized world was at peace. A quarter of a century before the birth of Jesus, the gates of the temple of Janus in Rome, which were always open when the Empire was involved in war, were closed by the order of Augustus Cæsar, for the third time since the foundation of the Eternal City. Rome was mistress of the world, and had conquered peace by the might of her invincible arms.

During the previous century, she had extended her power in the East under the great commanders, Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey. Asia Minor had been subdued, and all its vast territory was reduced to a tributary condition. The king of Armenia had been defeated. Syria and Palestine submitted to Pompey, and were converted to Roman provinces. On the north-east, the Parthian successors of the ancient Persian empire alone maintained their independence, having thus far resisted all attempts at Roman invasion and conquest.

Rome before the Cæsars.—The Servile Insurrection.

Rome, in the early part of the century nominally a republic, was never one in reality. While the government was republican in form, the greater part of the population of the capital and chief cities were slaves, deprived of all civil rights. In the year 73 B.C., this class rose in insurrection, led by Spartacus, a Thrakian gladiator. For nearly three years, they maintained a partially successful warfare against the veteran armies of the republic, a large part of Italy being in the hands of the servile classes during this period. It was not until several powerful armies had been defeated, and forces of great magnitude were brought into the field, that the insurgents were overthrown. Such was the might of an oppressed class, struggling for equal political rights against the most powerful nation that the world had ever known. To these people, the religion of Jesus, with its communistic spirit and its doctrine of the kingdom of heaven soon to be established on the earth,—the inheritance of the poor and the oppressed,—would come with the blessing of renewed hope and the promise of ultimate deliverance.*

Pompey, victorious in the East, and successful in his conflicts with the pirates of the Mediterranean, was master of Rome for a time, but soon

*The early Fathers of the Church, as will be seen hereafter, like the Fathers of the American republic, failed to make a practical application of these principles to the existing institution of slavery, but, on the contrary, often directly recognized and sustained it. Nevertheless, the principles existed as a leaven, working for the ultimate regeneration of society.



had to contend with the rival talents and ambition of Julius Cæsar. The first Triumvirate, comprising Pompey, Crassus, and Cæsar, subsequently became arbiters of the destinies of the growing empire and virtual masters of the world. Cæsar, appointed to command the armies of Rome in Gaul, completed the conquest of that country, and extended his victorious arms into Germany and Britain. His subsequent history, his conflicts with and triumphs over his rivals, his final attainment of the imperial power, which he held until his assassination in the year 44 B.C., these facts are too familiar to the students of history, and too little germane to our subject, to require further elaboration.

Rome under the Cæsars.—The Jewish Colony.

Rome, the queen city of the world, at this time contained a population variously calculated at from a million and a half to eight million souls. The latter estimate is doubtless greatly exaggerated: probably about two millions would approximate the actual number of inhabitants. This population included a considerable colony of Jews, many of whom had emigrated to Rome during the earlier years of Pompey's supremacy. The Hebrew colonists dwelt in a mean quarter of the city, beyond the Tiber; and, on account of their social exclusiveness and the character of their religion, they were regarded with jealousy and suspicion by the masses of the native population. Nevertheless, they were industrious and frugal, and were generally entitled to the credit of being

good citizens. Julius Cæsar recognized their virtues, and granted them many favors. This Jewish colony subsequently became the nucleus of the Christian Church in Rome, and the earliest assemblies of Christians in the metropolis were held in the Jewish quarter of the city.

Under the imperial sway of the Cæsars, Rome attained a power and magnificence never previously or subsequently equalled. Cicero, Catiline, Crassus, Pompey, the younger Cato, Scipio,—these are a few of the great names among her citizens during the century preceding the Christian era. For two hundred years, Greece had been the political subject of Rome, but had itself subjected the Eternal City intellectually, and through it the intelligence of the world, giving to the great empire its official language and its highest development of art, literature, and philosophy. Four centuries before the Christian era, the philosophy of Greece had reached its culmination in the transcendent genius of Plato, whose far-reaching thought has rendered all subsequent ages his debtors. The influence of the Platonic philosophy upon the development of Christian doctrine was not inconsiderable, and will constitute an important element in our later discussions.

Religion under the Empire.—Roman Tolerance.

Rome was more cosmopolitan and tolerant than any other nation of antiquity which had sought to extend its domain by conquest. The genius of Greece, on the contrary, had been pre-eminently dogmatic and intolerant. Even her most distin-



guished philosophers were expatriated, or subjected, like Sokrates, to the penalty of death, if their teachings appeared to conflict with any of the leading features of the popular theology. Her religion, accordingly, did not readily coalesce with the alien faiths of her conquered provinces. The attempt to introduce it by force into Palestine had already resulted in the revolt of the Asmoneans and the final overthrow of the Greek dynasties which had governed that country since its conquest by Alexander. Rome, on the contrary, did not seek to overthrow the religions of her subject peoples, but tolerated and protected them, unless they opposed her secular dominion, often assimilating them in part into her own cultus with their foreign rites and ceremonies.*

She had early adopted the gods of Greece, whose intenser personality than that of the ancient Roman deities attracted the worship of the masses of the people; while the priests, philosophers, and educated classes were initiated into the mysteries of the "Sacred Drama of Eleusis," which promised consolations for the trials of the present life, and taught the doctrine of the resurrection and the life to come. In the Eleusinian cultus, the Greek and later Roman faith reached their highest ethical development. Promises of future reward were offered to the initiated on certain conditions, not merely of ceremonial observance, but also of personal purity and piety, of justice and right-doing between man and man. The doctrine of

*See Renan's *English Conferences* for an interesting discussion of the influence of the Roman religion upon early Christianity.

a spiritual, pantheistic monotheism seems to have been taught, of which the objective anthropomorphism of the popular mythology offered no suggestion. Absolute chastity was required of the priests during the celebration of the mysteries; and celibacy was made obligatory to certain orders of the priesthood, from the time of the assumption of the priestly office. Abstinence from certain articles of food was required of the celebrants. Initiation was preceded by a rite of purification resembling Christian baptism; and a sacred meal, similar to the eucharist, constituted a portion of the ceremonial. On the nineteenth day of the great annual festival, a solemn sacrifice was offered to Asklēpios, the god who had died, and was subsequently resuscitated as Iakchos. The familiar representations of Iakchos as a young child, with his mother, Persephonē,—sometimes identified with the Egyptian deities, Horos and Isis, in the later Roman period,—doubtless helped to suggest the familiar conception of the Virgin and child in early Christian art; and the mystic representation of the resurrection, long familiar to the favored initiates of Greece and Rome, prepared the way for the acceptance of the mythical legend of the resurrection of Christ. "The idea of the saviour Daimôn sprung from the mother goddess," says Lenormant, "is essentially a Pelasgic and popular conception." * It was connected with the rites of Eleusis from their earliest period, and, together with the univer-

*A most complete and interesting account of the Mysteries may be found in a series of articles by Prof. François Lenormant, entitled "The Eleusinian Mysteries: A Study of Religious History," in the *Contemporary Review* of May, July, *et seq.* 1880.



sal belief in the incarnation of the gods, was a forerunner, if not a causal prototype, of the subsequently developed Christian doctrines of the miraculous birth and the divine incarnation of Jesus.

Oriental Influences.—Mithraicism.

About the year 180 A.D., the Emperor Commodus introduced into Rome the rival mystic and ritualistic worship of the Persian god Mithra, or Mithras. The new cultus speedily became popular among the literary and fashionable classes, and obtained public recognition until the time of Constantine. Subsequent even to the secular ascendency of Christianity, it was handed down from age to age through the esoteric order of the Rosicrucians and the secret societies of the Middle Ages. The ceremonies observed in the worship of Mithra are described by Tertullian, a Christian writer of about 200 A.D., as strongly resembling the sacraments of the Church. The initiates were admitted by a rite of baptism. They worshipped in little chapels, similar to Christian churches. They made use of a species of eucharist, eating the sacred bread, draδna, accompanied by solemn religious ceremonies, while the neophyte was tested by twelve consecutive penances, or tortures. As in the Eleusinian Mysteries, the doctrines of a life after death, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of rewards and punishments, were taught by Mithracism. The influence of this new religion upon the thought and literature of the time was absorbing and all-pervasive. "I sometimes allow myself to say," says Renan, "that, had

not Christianity taken the lead, Mithraicism would have become the religion of the world." The Gnostics doubtless borrowed largely from Mithraicism; and the popular sects of Judaism are also thought to have derived many of their rites and doctrines from kindred mysteries, through Babylonia. The indirect influence of these conceptions upon the current and subsequent development of Christian doctrine was doubtless considerable.* The leading Mithraic festival, celebrated at the winter solstice, identical in time with the Roman Saturnalia, was ultimately assimilated by Christianity, and recognized as commemorative of the birth of Jesus, which the apostolic tradition had assigned to the spring-time instead of the 25th of December. The cross was a Mithraic symbol long before the advent of Christianity.† It also constituted one of the eight altar implements of the Buddhists, and from very early times had been recognized as the sacred symbol of the god Nilus in Egypt. It is also of frequent recurrence in those buried cities of the Troad which Dr. Schliemann has recently exhumed.

Decay of the Religious Sentiment.—Euhemerism.

The latter days of the Republic and the earlier decades of the Empire were noteworthy for manifest evidences of the decay of the religious sentiment. The intellectual classes in Italy and

*Mithraicism is treated incidentally by Renan, *English Conferences*, and by Dean Milman, *History of Christianity*. See also Lecky, and article in Encyclopædia Britannica.

†For a fuller discussion of the cross as a religious symbol, see *The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art*, by Richard Payne Knight, A.M.

Greece, including the priesthood, had become almost completely divorced from any vital belief in the current systems of mythology, based largely upon magic and divination, which constituted the popular religion. Repelled from these superstitions, they found their solace in the pursuit of philosophy and the investigation of the esoteric doctrines of the mysteries. The theories of Euhemeros, a Greek writer who endeavored to trace the myths and stories of the gods to a natural source in purely human incidents, obtained wide acceptance among the educated classes. Euhemeros taught that the gods were originally great kings or heroes, whom their admirers had deified. All that is related of them, he said, is but the exaggeration and glorification of common events, which we may readily trace back to their historical sources. Thus, when Kronos is said to have swallowed his own children, and to have been dethroned by Jupiter, we are to understand that we have the allegorized history of a king in ancient times, when human sacrifices were offered, who was dethroned by another king, who at the same time abolished these sacrifices. The conception of Euhemeros early passed over from Greece to Rome. His book was translated into Latin, and his views speedily became predominant. So general was the contempt for the superstitions of the popular mythology that it is reported that, when two members of the priestly hierarchy—the augurs or haruspices—met in public, it was with the utmost difficulty that they could restrain their laughter.

It was an easy transition from the doctrine of Euhemeros to the adoration of living men as gods. The emperors demanded and received divine honors, a custom which may have been suggested by a similar one long prevalent among the Hindus, and recognized in their code as a sacred obligation. We read in the Institutes of Manu: "Even though a child, the king must not be treated lightly, from an idea that he is a mere mortal. No: he is a powerful divinity who appears in human shape."* A survival of this custom, transmitted to the Eastern branch of the Christian Church, still prevails in Russia, where the czar, or Cæsar, is addressed in the popular catechism—prepared by the government and which every child is compelled to learn—as "our god on earth." The transition from these beliefs to the doctrine of the Divine Incarnation as promulgated by Christianity would evidently be easy and natural.

Revival of Paganism.—Commerce and Civilization.

This doctrine, indeed, in its pre-Christian form, appears to have been directly connected with a marked change which was observable in the tone of religious sentiment throughout the empire from about the time of the advent of Christianity. During the years of peace which succeeded the assumption of imperial power by Augustus Cæsar there occurred a noteworthy revival of the dormant religious feeling among the people. This tended to assume the form of the veneration of the sacred city

*Manu VII., iv., 8. See also *Early Laws and Customs*, by Sir Henry Sumner Maine.



itself,—of Rome, now the mistress of the civilized world,—and of the emperor as her incarnate representative. Statues of the emperor appeared everywhere, and received the adoration of the populace. Altars dedicated to the genius of Rome were set up at the cross-roads throughout Italy and in many of the provinces. The Jews alone steadily repelled this form of worship, as they also rejected the related doctrine of the divine incarnation of Jesus.

Nor was this revival of the religious sentiment the only significant event of this long period of peace. Commerce, which had previously struggled against the conflicting interests and jealousies of alien States, now extended its beneficent influences without hindrance among the friendly provinces of the mighty empire, carrying with it material prosperity and a genuine cosmopolitan spirit, sowing everywhere the seeds of brotherhood and peace. No political economist of the "American School," fortunately, had yet arisen to sound the praises of high protective or prohibitory tariffs, or to raise a craven and selfish protest against "competition with the pauper labor" of the neighboring provinces. The only obstacles which this growing spirit of fraternity among the nations had to combat were the physical difficulties of overcoming the separating conditions of time and space, and the local prejudices, religious and political, of nations which were not included under the protection of the eagles of Rome. So important was this new impetus to the commercial spirit to the future of Christianity that it may be affirmed in general terms that the subsequent progress of the new religion was co-extensive

with the limits of commercial freedom. The confines of the Roman Empire became, practically, the boundaries of Christian propagandism. The outlying nations which had not been reduced to the condition of Roman dependencies—with the exception of those whose civilization was of later growth—have never been permanently converted to the Christian faith.

The Stoic Philosophy.

The most remarkable ethical movement of the period now under consideration may doubtless be discovered in the rise and progress of the Stoic Philosophy, especially in its influence upon the lives and public careers of the "five good emperors," Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines. Introduced into the Roman Empire from Cyprus by Zeno soon after the time of Alexander the Great, its germs were not improbably, like those of Christianity, of Semitic origin.* At first, it attracted little popular notice, and subsequently drew public attention only to be regarded as an enemy to the state religion, in consequence of which it experienced a period of persecution and martyrdom which preceded and temporarily rivalled that which subsequently befell the Christians. Its leading advocates and teachers were of stainless

*Zeno was himself of Phœnician birth, a native of Citium in Cyprus, a city populated in part from Phœnicia. "A striking feature in post-Aristotelian philosophy," says Zeller, "... is the fact that so many of its representatives come from Eastern countries, in which Greek and Oriental modes of thought met and mingled. ... Next to the later Neo-Platonic school, this remark is of none more true than the Stoic."—*The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, by Dr. E. Zeller, Professor in the University of Heidelberg. p. 35 *et seq.*



personal reputation, and its doctrines embodied the purest principles of self-abnegation and altruistic morality. Its disciples were animated by a lofty patriotism and a fine spirit of benevolence toward their fellow-men of every social condition, a spirit which conflicted with the despotic impulses of Caligula, Claudius, and Nero as inevitably as it sustained and directed the good emperors during that succeeding interval which Gibbon terms "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was the most happy." In its ethical and humane tendencies, it prepared the way for the precepts of the Christian gospel, though its noteworthy freedom from the contamination of popular superstitions and from the metaphysical mysticism of the current philosophies unfitted it for general popular acceptance in the age in which it appeared.

"Equality and the abstract idea of the rights of man," says Renan, "were boldly preached by Stoicism." The amelioration of the condition of the poor and the oppressed was an ever-present purpose in the minds of its disciples. It was Trajan, the friend of the Stoics, acting doubtless under the benign influence of the pure teachings of this philosophy, and not a Christian emperor, who first established orphan asylums in Rome. It was Antoninus Pius who founded additional asylums for poor young girls, in honor of his wife, the Empress Faustina, whom he loved so well. Christianity, in its public charities, did but assume and continue a work which had originated under the influence of Stoicism; yet we hear it proclaimed continually,

and recently by a religious teacher no less eminent and liberal than Henry Ward Beecher, that the earliest institutions for public charity were established by the Christian Emperors.*

It is foreign to our purpose to present here a complete exposition of the doctrines of Stoicism. It is sufficient to direct attention to it as a noteworthy moral force in the centuries immediately succeeding and following the advent of Christianity, antedating the new religion in the promulgation of many of its humane and ethical principles. The system which proclaimed the doctrine of human equality, and which honored Epictetus, the slave, as one of its worthiest representatives and apostles, was surely not devoid of that democratic principle which afterward commended the Christian religion to the oppressed peoples of Europe. Had it presented its doctrines in a more popular form and consented to compromise with current superstitions, the face of history during the succeeding centuries might have been widely changed.†

Egypt under the Greeks and Romans.

Passing now in thought from the immediate vicinity of Rome to the shores of Africa, we find Egypt a subject nation, long shorn of its ancient pre-eminence and power. Five hundred years

* Rev. Newenham Hoare, of London, late chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, i the author of an interesting pamphlet showing that hospitals for the afflicted existed many centuries before Christianity.

† An admirable popular presentation of the doctrines of Stoicism may be found in F. May Holland's *Reign of the Stoics*. See also Renan's *Marcus Aurelius*, and standard works on the history of philosophy.



before, it had been conquered by the Persians; and for more than a century it remained a Persian province. Subsequently, for a second period, it was subjected by the Persian arms. Under the influence of Zoroastrianism, the latent dualism in its ancient religion had been developed. The sun-god Seth, the old-time physical antagonist of Osiris, took on the moral depravity of the Persian Ahriman, and became the prototype of the Hebrew Satan and the Christian Devil. In the esoteric doctrines of the priesthood were prefigured many of the metaphysical notions of the Gnostics and of the orthodox Christian theology.

In the year 332 B.C., Egypt was conquered by Alexander the Great; and for a thousand years thereafter, in its intellectual development, it remained essentially a Greek province. Alexander founded the city of Alexandria, which contained a composite population of Greeks, Egyptians, and Jews. It speedily became one of the great capitals of the world, and the chief centre of Greek culture and civilization. After the death of Alexander, Egypt passed under the rule of the Ptolemies,—a succession of rulers of Macedonian extraction, to which dynasty belonged the celebrated Cleopatra, who reigned jointly with her brother in the year 30 B.C., at the time of the Roman conquest.

The Greek influence effected not merely a political, but also a social and intellectual revolution in Egypt. Its religious and literary life, as well as its art and architectural development, had been hindered and restrained by the rigid sacerdotalism of the ancient *régime*. Together with political servi-

tude, Egypt derived from the Greeks and Romans a larger measure of mental liberty than she had before enjoyed, the influence of which was manifested in a new and wonderful intellectual life which centred in the Alexandrian schools. The popular religion of the Roman Empire commingled with the old historic faith of the country. The gods of Egypt were identified with those of Greece and Rome, and foreign notions were projected into the ancient religion,—a tendency which resulted in intellectual confusion, and ultimately in bringing the popular mythologies into contempt among the thinking classes of the people. The fragment of the ancient Egyptian race, however, though powerless politically, still clung to their ancestral faith, which awaited the universalizing, solvent, and assimilative influence of Christianity to compel its final disintegration. The remnants of the indigenous race, known to us as the Kopts, were early converts to the new religion; and Alexandria became an important Christian bishopric.

Alexandrian Influence on Christianity.—Philo Judaeus.

The subject of the relations of the religion of ancient Egypt to the Hebrew cultus is one of exceeding interest, but here calls for no extended treatment. The large colony of Jews in Egypt had long since adopted the Greek language, which they employed not only in their daily intercourse, but also in the worship of the synagogues and the ceremonies of their religion,—the ancient Hebrew faith as modified in Judaism. They had even



transformed a forsaken temple of the Egyptian cat-goddess, Pasht, at Leontopolis, into a copy of the temple at Jerusalem,—a proceeding which was not regarded with favor by the Jews of Palestine, who viewed with increasing distrust and jealousy the influences proceeding from their brethren in Egypt. In Alexandria, under the patronage, it is said, of the reigning Ptolemy, the Hebrew Scriptures had been translated into Greek. This translation, the Septuagint, was frequently used and quoted by the Christian Fathers, and furnished an invaluable aid to the introduction and promulgation of the new religion. Those social and commercial influences which we have already noted as prevailing throughout the Roman Empire, that tended subsequently to promote the spread of Christianity, were notably present in this new metropolis. Alexandria was a great commercial centre, her population being mainly devoted to manufactures and trade. The common people among the Jews had learned of the skilled workmen of Egypt the secrets of their crafts, and for mutual protection had associated themselves in guilds like the modern trades-unions, the members of which engaged to support each other when out of work.*

The influence of Alexandria, in bringing together people of diverse races and religions, in promoting a cosmopolitan spirit in religion and philosophy, in sustaining commerce and thus

*It is noteworthy that many of the social influences tending to the amelioration of the condition of the laboring poor, which are commonly assumed to have received their original impetus from Christianity, are traced by the impartial historian to pre-Christian times.

bringing distant parts of the empire into closer relations, in hastening the decay of the ancient faiths and furnishing material and proselytes for the new, was of the greatest significance in the history of early Christianity. The Alexandrian school of philosophy, which attempted to fuse into a single system Oriental mysticism, Jewish intuitionalism, —the doctrine of a divine revelation,—and the metaphysical idealism of Plato; which culminated during the third century of the Christian era in Neo-Platonism,—the final form and product of Greek philosophy,—and the influence of which was predominant in the formation of the dogmatic theology of the Christian Church, had an origin almost contemporary with the beginnings of Christianity. Its earliest representative was Philo Judæus, a Greek-speaking Jew, a Pharisee by belief and association, though by descent, it is said, of the priestly family of Aaron.* In the philosophy of Philo, Judaism first escaped from the bondage of its national exclusiveness, and admitted that spiritual truth was discoverable elsewhere than in the Hebrew writings. This admission, however, was not full and explicit, but was accompanied by the historically indefensible claim that the truths of the Platonic philosophy were themselves derived from the writings of Moses and the prophets. The philosophy of Philo was an attempt, by means of an elaborate system of allegorical interpretation, to discover these abstruse metaphysical dogmas in the Hebrew Scriptures.

*Philo was a contemporary of Jesus, born probably some twenty or thirty years before the Nazarene prophet, and dying some years later than Jesus.



Philo's teaching was based upon that Oriental dualism which, originating perhaps in the later development of Zoroastrianism, had penetrated Judaism and the religion of Egypt after the Persian conquests, and found its clearest philosophical expression in the doctrines of Plato. It conceived an absolute separation and antagonism between spirit and matter; between the Infinite High and Holy One, whose nature was purely subjective and spiritual, and the objective universe. How, then, could the universe be created, since there was this infinite separation between God and matter? This was the problem which Philo attempted to solve, in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures and the doctrine of Plato. Upon the familiar language of Genesis, "And God said, Let there be light," he based his theory of the creative Word, —the Logos.* Not the infinitely pure and spiritual deity, accordingly, but the Logos, an emanation from the supreme God, was the creator of the universe. Philo did not absolutely personify the Logos, nor identify it with any historical individual, as in the later Christian development of the doctrine. His thought appears to hover between the conception of the Logos as an attribute —a purely metaphysical idea, similar to the ideas of Plato—and its more complete personification. The Logos was the Demiourgos, the shaper of primeval matter; the first begotten Son of God,

* This doctrine, as we have seen, had already penetrated Judaism from the East, and was used by the Rabbis of Palestine in their Aramaic commentaries on the Scriptures. This use was probably known to Philo, and may have helped to suggest his theory of the common origin of the Hebrew writings and the Platonic philosophy.

the shadow and seeming portrait of God, by means of which, as by an assumed instrument, the world was made; the heavenly food of the soul, from whom all eternal instructions and wisdoms flow; the fountain of wisdom; heavenly and immortal nourishment: such are the descriptive expressions in the writings of Philo, many of them strikingly like the familiar teaching of the Fourth Gospel.*

"He strains every nerve toward the highest divine Logos, . . . in order that, drawing from that spring, he may escape death and win everlasting life.† . . . Nothing is more luminous and irradiating than the divine Logos, by the participation in which other things dispel darkness and gloom, earnestly desiring to partake of the living Light.‡ . . . The stamp of the seal of God is the immortal Logos.§ . . . The divine Logos is free from all sins, voluntary and involuntary. . . . Those who have knowledge of the truth are properly called the sons of God: ‖ he who is still unfit to be named the son of God should endeavor to fashion himself to the first-born Logos of God. . . . It is impossible for the love of the world and the love of God to co-exist." ¶ It is hardly possible to conceive that the author of the Fourth Canonical Gospel was not familiar with these expressions drawn from the writings of Philo, or that his identification of Jesus with the Logos was not based upon the then current teachings of the Alexandrian

*See Mangey's ed. of Philo's Works, vol. i., pp. 308, 106, 482, 560. Compare John i.-xiv., 3; vi., 35, etc.

†Compare John vi., 40. ‡ Compare John i., 4, 5-9.

§ Compare John vi., 27. ‖ Compare John i., 12.

¶ Compare John xvii., 9-14, etc.



philosophy. Of the further development of this doctrine in the systems of the Gnostics and the orthodox Christian theology, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

Carthage and Phœnicia,—their Gifts to Civilization.

Four centuries before the Christian era, the great Punic or Carthaginian empire had possessed all the coast of Africa west of Egypt, and controlled the greater number of the islands of the Western Mediterranean. It had inherited from its Phœnician founders the traits of a great commercial nation, and was one of the first countries in the world to substitute sailing vessels for galleys propelled by oars. A century and a half before the Christian era, this nation was virtually extinguished. All that remained of it was the powerless subject of Rome. So little had Carthage bequeathed to the world, that we know less of her history than of any other nation of antiquity. Her religion was borrowed from Phœnicia. Baal, Ashtoreth, and Melkarth, gods of the fierce and destructive powers of nature, were her deities; and, as in the parent country, they were worshipped with sensual and barbarous rites and bloody sacrifices, often of human victims. The gentler and humaner religion of Rome was a pleasing substitute for this cruel barbarism. The new Roman city of Carthage, founded by Augustus Cæsar, grew rapidly, but never attained the commercial prominence of its predecessor. It became an important Christian bishopric early in the third century.

Among other notable names in the history of the Church, Carthaginia furnished that of Augustine, whose influence was predominant in the formation of the Christian theology.*

Phœnicia, with its great commercial cities, Tyre and Sidon, had reached the zenith of its power eight hundred years before the Christian era, and had now long been falling into decay. It had been conquered by Alexander the Great, by whose armies Tyre was reduced to ashes, many of its inhabitants were slain, and the remainder were sold as slaves. Though subsequently rebuilt, it never regained its former commercial importance. Phœnicia lacked that supreme ethical element in its civilization which alone suffices to insure permanence in the life of nations. Apart from the commercial spirit which it transmitted to other nations, there was little in its example worthy to live in history. No important remains of a Phœnician literature have been preserved to us,† though that country modified and transmitted to Europe from Egypt the vehicle of all modern literature,—the alphabet. Phœnicia was a nation of shopkeepers. Its morals, religion, official stations, as well as its goods, were for sale to the highest bidder.

* May not some of the barbarous features of this theology be traceable to the indefinable, but none the less positive influence of survivals of this earlier theological barbarism?

†There is, nevertheless, considerable indirect evidence that Phœnicia was not without a distinctive and characteristic philosophy of indigenous growth and strong Semitic peculiarities. Speaking of the Greek and Roman Empires in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, Ritter declares, "The wisdom of the Magi, of the Egyptians, *and of the Phœnician priests* and the Jews soon became famous."—*History of Ancient Philosophy*, by Dr. Heinrich Ritter. Vol. iv., p. 18.



Conquered by the Romans in the year 64 B.C., its life and civilization were assimilated into the greater life of the Western world, and it ceased to exist as a nation.

The Keltic Communities.—The Druids and their Religion.

Spain, Gaul, and Britain, nations of Western Europe, were annexed to the Roman Empire during the half-century preceding the advent of Christianity. Spain soon became thoroughly Romanized, and remained for many years one of the chief centres of Roman literature and civilization. The Keltic element predominated in its population, as also in Gaul and Ireland. At this period, Spain and Gaul swarmed with Roman burgesses and merchants. It was almost impossible for a native of Gaul to transact a piece of business without the intervention of a Roman. Roman farmers and graziers were busy introducing improved methods of agriculture,—an occupation for which the Keltic peoples had never manifested any fondness. Their principal pursuits were navigation and pastoral husbandry. They were the first people who regularly navigated the Atlantic Ocean.

The inland Kelts, whose domains extended back into the western districts of Switzerland and Germany, were mainly occupied in breeding and rearing domestic animals. They were everywhere a people of rude tastes, and literature and the arts were in a very low state among them. The political structure of the Keltic communities was that of a loosely compacted confederation, tending to

feudalism. Its basis was the clan-canton, organized with a governing prince or chief, a council of elders, and a community of freemen capable of bearing arms. All non-combatants were excluded from citizenship. Women were held in so low an estimate that they were ranked with slaves, the laws permitting the torture of these two classes, but prohibiting the torture of freemen.

The Keltic priesthood, known as the Druids, united all Gaul and the British Isles in a common religious brotherhood. It constituted a compact organization, the chief of which, a sort of pope, was elected by a convocation of priests, as the pope of Rome is now chosen by the college of cardinals. Priests were exempt from taxation and military service. They held annual councils, and administered a kind of governmental jurisdiction over the people. They were permitted to inflict capital punishment by sacrificing condemned criminals in their religious ceremonies. Bodies of human victims often smoked on the same sacrificial altars with those of beasts. The Druids thus constituted a sort of ecclesiastical state or theocracy, and ruled over an unintelligent and believing people similar to the Irish peasants of the present day. The word "Druid" is derived by the best philologists from two Keltic roots meaning "God-speaking," which indicates a belief in supernatural inspiration similar to that claimed for the Hebrew prophets. The Druidical religion inculcated the worship of one supreme Being, but encouraged also the veneration of fetiches. A sacred fire, kindled with certain religious ceremonials, was reverenced

as a symbol of the sun. Circular temples, open at the top to admit the sunlight, were dedicated to the solar deity. Their religious rites were often celebrated in sacred groves of oak.

The Druids taught the doctrine of a future life, and a state of rewards and punishments. They professed "to reform morals, secure peace, and encourage goodness." "They assumed," says Cæsar, "to discourse of the hidden nature of things, of the extent of the universe and of the earth, of the forms and movements of the stars, and of the power and rule of the gods." They practised astrology, divination, and magic. Relics found among Druidical remains in Ireland are thought to have constituted parts of astronomical instruments designed to illustrate the motion and phases of the moon. A sacred character was ascribed to the oak, mistletoe, hyssop, vervain, and marshwort. These plants were plucked only after ceremonial ablutions and offerings of bread and wine. This primitive religion was supplanted in part by that of the Romans, and subsequently the Keltic populations easily assimilated the forms and doctrines of Latin Christianity, many of which were prefigured in the older faith.

Character and Religion of the Teutonic Peoples.

Concerning the Teutonic tribes of Northern Europe, little was known before the time of Cæsar. At the commencement of the Christian era, they constituted a horde of semi-barbarous peoples, many of them agriculturists and having some fixed settlements. Their chief occupations, how-

ever, were hunting, the care of cattle, and the pursuit of arms. They were brave and independent by nature, but given to the vices of gambling and intoxication, the evil influences of which largely counteracted the nobler traits which might have raised them earlier out of barbarism.

Their population was divided into nobles, freemen, and serfs. The freemen elected their chiefs, whom the Romans often called kings. The Teutons held women and aged people in high regard. They honored chastity no less than valor, and presented a picture of domestic life more perfect and beautiful than could be found elsewhere in the Western world. This characteristic, with a robust mentality and ingrained love of personal liberty, were the chief gifts of this people to the civilization of the future; gifts which led them as naturally and inevitably to Protestant Christianity, and through it to Rationalism, as the characteristics of the Kelts led them to Catholicism. "It was the rude barbarians of Germany," says Guizot, "who introduced this sentiment of personal independence, this love of individual liberty, into European civilization; it was unknown among the Romans, it was unknown to the Christian Church, it was unknown in nearly all the civilizations of antiquity." He might have added with truth, It is the most powerful and characteristic element of our modern civilization.

The religion of the Teutons was in part developed from the Nature-worship of the primitive Aryan peoples, with an intermixture, apparently, of Semitic or Babylonian elements, an inheritance,



perhaps, from the Turanian tribes, whom they supplanted in Europe. In part, doubtless, it was of later indigenous growth. It was essentially a polytheistic system, including the worship of Odin or Thor, and his consort Fria, or Frigga, Tiu, the heaven-god, corresponding with Zeus, Jupiter, and the Vedic Dyaûs-pitar, and many other subordinate deities. Priests, bards, and sacred groves were dedicated to this worship. The doctrine of a future life in Walhalla was taught. The gods were considered mortal like human beings, as with the Buddhists. Domestic animals, including horses, and sometimes human victims, were offered as sacrifices. The religion of the Teutons was less influenced by the Pagan cultus of Rome than that of the Kelts, during its transition to Christianity.

Resume and Conclusion.

At the advent of Christianity, Greece, through the conquests of Alexander, had already contributed to the civilization of the future her wealth of art, literature, and philosophy, the sum of which is known as Hellenic culture. Rome, under the mighty power of the Cæsars, was bestowing upon the Western world the blessing of the most perfect code of laws which was then in being, and uniting the nations in a common brotherhood of citizenship. Phœnicia had long before communicated the commercial spirit to Carthage and to Greece, and through them to Rome, thus bringing distant peoples into closer communion; a mighty and too little recognized influence in promoting civilization and brotherhood.

Rome, with her State religion,—a hollow ecclesiasticism to the more intelligent,—stood ready, at the demand of self-interest, to dethrone Jupiter, and to pass over the temples of her gods, her images, her festivals, the paraphernalia of her priests, and the title of Pontifex Maximus, then held by Cæsar as the head of the Pagan cultus, to that new religion which, through the supremacy of the empire among the nations of the world, was soon to make such mighty strides toward universal dominion. Her sculptured heads of Jupiter were to descend to posterity, rechristened by the name of St. Peter; and her little god Vaticanus, whose function it was to watch over the first lisping of infants, was to bestow his name upon the Vatican,—the palace of the Christian popes.

The great Aryan monotheism of Zoroaster had met in Babylon the great Semitic monotheism of the Hebrew prophets, and, together with some more questionable benefactions, had blessed it with its gift of a belief in a life beyond the grave, and thus prepared the way for one of the leading doctrines of Christianity. The word "Father" as applied to the Supreme Being had entered Judaism from that other contact with the Aryan races through the Greeks, and was used by Jewish Rabbis of the century preceding the birth of Jesus. The Hebrew doctrine of the Messiah had taken a new and more personal form under the influence of contemporary Persian notions, and the stimulus of foreign oppression. Millennial expectations imported from Babylon were "in the air."



The writers of the Book of Daniel and the apocryphal Book of Enoch had applied the term "the Son of Man"—a common designation of the prophets—to designate the coming Messiah. Jonathan ben Uzziel, a Jewish Rabbi and contemporary of Jesus, was interpreting various passages in the Old Testament with the phrase *Memra*, "the Word," derived probably through Babylon from India. Hillel had already proclaimed the "Golden Rule" as the substance and foundation of Judaism.

The ancient religion of Egypt was without vitality, but preserved a lingering existence. Some of her gods had passed over to Rome; the figures of Isis and Horos, and Persephone and Iakchos were prefiguring the familiar Christian representation of the Virgin and Child. The Greek gods were emigrating to Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, Gaul, and Spain, as well as to Rome. The Eternal City welcomed the new gods as heartily as she despised them all, both new and old. The recognition of the old gods under new names—the transfer of functions and characteristics from one to another—was leading the way through scepticism to monotheism. In Rome, the gods were said to be more numerous than the people. In Athens, every street corner had its statue of a deity. The world was weary of conflict, unsatisfied with existing philosophies, disgusted with priestly arrogance, sophistry, and insincerity, but longing for a religion which would proclaim the growing faith in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

From the time of Alexander, war had been the

most potent civilizer, drawing together the nations, with their diverse civilizations and religions, into a closer unity, to which each contributed its peculiar gift, which the world received and assimilated into its common life. Looking back through the centuries over the broad sweep of the entire horizon of this ancient world, above the conflict of arms, the groans of the poor, the dying, and the oppressed, the loud laughter of the Roman augurs at the absurdity of their rites, the sneers of sceptical philosophy-mongers who believed neither in the gods nor in the moral law, — may we not behold the working of that Power, eternal and invincible, that in all ages makes for righteousness, civilization, and brotherhood? Do we not perceive the growing intelligence and virtues of man, triumphing over his wrath and wickedness and folly, already building up the better kingdom of the future, — the Kingdom of God on earth, which is also the Republic of Man? Shall we not see in the peasant child of Galilee the "Son of Man" indeed, — the natural product of his race and time, participating in some of its errors and superstitions, but ready to speak the vital word for humanity fearlessly and unfalteringly, willing to die rather than falter or recant? All the circumstances of this period point to the conclusion that old uses were outgrown; a new era was about to dawn in the life of humanity, — the product of easily discernible and perfectly natural causes. A fateful hour had arrived in the history of civilization, and it did not seek in vain for its man.



III.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

LIKE Zoroaster, Buddha, and the great religious teachers of India, Jesus of Nazareth left no written word. Absorbed in the pressing labors of the moment, anticipating no extended future for the existing order of society, knowing, probably, no language but his native Galilean tongue, his impassioned appeals, his charming illustrative parables, his brief and sententious aphorisms, have been transmitted to us through the medium of oral tradition, collected and put in writing some time after his death. In the extant documents, the original tradition is intermingled with a mythical and legendary accretion of subsequent origin and development, and translated into an alien tongue. We have absolutely no contemporary record of the life and teachings of Jesus, either in or out of the writings of the New Testament.

Early Christian Literature.—The Story of the Manuscripts.

The earliest of these writings, in the order of their composition, are the Epistles of Paul. These and the other genuine Epistles of the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers throw valuable

light upon the primitive phases of Christian belief; but, beyond the mere fact that they assume the previous existence and tragical death of Jesus, and give currency to the early tradition of his resurrection, they afford us absolutely no information concerning him. Paul quotes but once the language of Jesus,—a single phrase in connection with a reference to the commemoration of the last supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do ye as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me." (I. Cor. xi., 25.)

For information concerning the life and teachings of Jesus, therefore, we are confined exclusively to the four Gospels.* Testimony, corroborative of his historical verity, may, as already indicated, be derived from the New Testament Epistles and the writings of the early Christian Fathers, who everywhere assume it as an unquestioned fact, and also from a few fragmentary allusions in the works of Jewish and Pagan writers in the first and early part of the second centuries. The destructive theory which doubts the existence of Jesus as an historical personage, and regards the gospel stories as entirely mythical, has no support whatever in the history and literature of the early Christian centuries. Of the reasons for the lack of frequent allusions to Jesus by Jewish and Pagan writers of the period, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

*Perhaps an exception should also be made in favor of the recently published *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* and the extant fragments of the "Gospel of the Hebrews," which are doubtless as old or older than the Gospels, and in general confirm the testimony of the Synoptics. Reference will hereafter be made to these documents.



For testimony concerning the date and reliability of the gospel histories, apart from the internal evidence of the documents, we must depend almost exclusively upon the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, sustained or corrected by such pertinent facts as may be derived from the secular history of the period. We have also certain extant documents, mainly anonymous or pseudonymous, known as the Apocryphal Gospels* and Epistles, which were regarded as genuine by some portion of the early Christian communities, and which are valuable for comparison with the books of the New Testament. Some of them are doubtless as old or older than our canonical Gospels, and they throw considerable light upon the development of doctrine and the differentiation of heretical sects from the main body of Christian believers during the earliest Christian centuries. In this lecture, it is proposed to examine the bearings of this literature in all its branches upon the question of our actual information concerning the life and teach-

*The names of some of the early Apocryphal Gospels, as preserved to us in the writings of the Fathers, are as follows: 1. The Gospel of the Birth of Mary. "In primitive times," says Hone, "there was a Gospel extant, bearing this name, attributed to Matthew, and received as genuine and authentic by several of the ancient Christian sects." The extant copy was preserved to us in the writings of Jerome, who lived in the fourth century and the early part of the fifth century of our era. Other versions, apparently differing somewhat from Jerome's, are quoted by early writers. 2. The Protevangelion, or "First Gospel," sometimes called the Gospel of James, the brother of Jesus. From internal evidence, this Gospel must probably be regarded as of later date than any of those subsequently declared canonical, save, possibly, the Fourth. It was frequently alluded to in the writings of the Fathers. 3. The Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, received by certain Gnostic sects of the second century; 4. A Second Gospel of the Infancy, attributed to the Apostle Thomas;

ings of Jesus and the character of the earliest Christian tradition. A tolerably clear comprehension of this subject appears to be absolutely essential to a true historical estimate of the beginnings of Christianity.

Character and Origin of the Four Gospels.

The four canonical Gospels are preserved to us in extant manuscripts of the fourth, fifth, and later Christian centuries. All of them were originally written, probably, during the second century of our era. Their authorship is unknown, and, with the possible exception of the Third Gospel, it cannot even be conjectured with reasonable probability. Renan supposes that Mark and Luke were written in Rome and Matthew in Palestine; but for these hypotheses we are obliged to rely mainly upon uncertain traditions, sustained or corrected by the known character of the documents themselves. Tradition also asserts that the Fourth Gospel was composed at Ephesus, but it

5. The Gospel of Nicodemus, probably written during the third century; 6. The Gospel of the Egyptians, of very early date; 7. The Gospel of Peter; 8. The Gospel of Paul; 9. The Gospel of Andrew; 10. The Gospel of Apelles; 11. The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. This important document, recently discovered by Bishop Bryennios in the Greek quarter of Constantinople, in a manuscript of the eleventh century, from internal evidence must be adjudged as old or older than any of our canonical Gospels. Its Chri-tology is not more developed than that of the Synoptics. It terms Jesus "the servant of God," and contains no allusion to the stories of the miraculous birth or to Jesus as the Son of God. 12. The Gospel of Barnabas; 13. The Gospel of Basilides, a Gnostic work of the second century; 14. The Gospel of Cerinthus, also a Gnostic writing; 15. The Gospel of the Ebionites, said to have been written in Aramaic, and sometimes identified with the Gospel of the Hebrews; 16. The Gospel of the Encratites; 17. The Gospel of Eve; 18. The Gospel of Hesychius. These, as well as the most of the following,



presents strong internal evidence of Alexandrian origin or influence. Prof. Robertson Smith terms them all "unapostolic digests of the second century." In the extant Greek version of the earliest manuscripts, we undoubtedly possess the original form of these documents with but little modification. There is no probability that any of them were translated entire from the Aramaic or Hebrew languages. Certain memoranda in the Aramaic tongue, however, doubtless existed prior to the composition of our Gospels; and one or more of the so-called Apocryphal Gospels appears to have been written in Aramaic. Among these memoranda, there seems to have been a very early collection of the *logia* or sayings of Jesus, unaccompanied, probably, by any historical data, the compilation of which was currently attributed to the Apostle Matthew. The First Gospel presents strong internal evidence of manufacture or composition out of several primitive documents, and it is probable that its author incorporated a translation of this early collection of the sayings of Jesus

were Gnostic works. 19. The Gospel of Marcion. Some orthodox writers regard this as a mutilated form of our Third Gospel, but it was doubtless of considerably earlier date,—as old or older than any of our Gospels. 20. The Gospel of Jude; 21. The Gospel of Judas Iscariot; 22. The Gospel of Matthias; 23. The Gospel of Merinthus; 24. The Gospel according to the Nazarenes; 25. The Gospel of Perfection; 26. The Gospel of Philip; 27. The Gospel of Scythianus; 28. The Gospel of Tatian; 29. The Gospel of Thaddeus; 30. The Gospel of Truth, used by the Valentinians, a school of the Gnostics; 31. The Gospel of Valentinus; 32. The Gospel of Life; 33. The Gospel of Longinus. These and other unenumerated Gospels were all certainly in existence before the synod of Laodicea, 365 A.D., "the first Christian assembly at which the canon was made the subject of a special ordinance." Some of them are unquestionably of as early or even of earlier date than any of those subsequently called canonical.

nearly or quite entire in his manuscript. Ewald, one of the most acute and thorough of our modern Biblical critics, distinguishes no less than twelve documents which he believes to have been worked up into our Synoptical Gospels.

Divergent Traditions of the Fourth and the Synoptical Gospels.

In the first three Gospels, we find many points of agreement,—a general concurrence as to the leading features in the public career of Jesus, and a marked similarity, often amounting to identity, of language, which indicates the common use, in part, of an earlier oral or written tradition. Between the synopsis or concurrent testimony of the first three Gospels and that of the Fourth Gospel, however, there is a divergence so complete as often to amount to irreconcilable opposition. It is impossible to harmonize the manifest and radical differences of these two traditions. All attempts in this direction involve the greatest violence to the natural dictates of the rational judgment.

The Synoptical Gospels represent the public labors of Jesus to have occupied a period of only about one year, giving an account of but a single visit to Jerusalem during his ministry. The Fourth Gospel extends the period of his public ministrations to more than three years, and represents him as frequently travelling back and forth between Galilee and Judea. The synoptics assume that nearly all of his miracles were wrought in Galilee, only one or two being assigned to his final visit to Judea. The Fourth Gospel expressly

limits the number of his miracles in Galilee to four, and assigns nearly all the more important ones to the vicinity of Jerusalem. The synoptics assume the prevalence of the belief in obsession or possession by evil spirits among the Jews,—a fact which is abundantly confirmed by extra-Biblical evidence. Many of the miracles of Jesus, as therein reported, consist of the alleged exorcism of these personal demons. The Fourth Gospel hardly contains a reference to this current superstition, and reports no miracle of this character. The Synoptical Gospels contain no reference to the miraculous transformation of water into wine at Cana of Galilee or to the resurrection of Lazarus, though these most marvellous of all the wonderful works attributed to Jesus are made the corner-stone and key-stone of the superstructure of the Fourth Gospel narrative.

More significant even than these differences is the marked divergence in the reports of the conversations and teachings of Jesus in the two traditions. The synoptics report his words in brief and forcible aphorisms, illustrated by the apt and striking use of the parable. The style and language employed are as individual and characteristic as those of Shakspere.* The chief burden and subject of his discourse is the explanation and illustration of his doctrine of the coming kingdom of heaven. In the Fourth Gospel, he is made to discourse in long, mystical disquisitions, largely

*Compare, for example, the parables of Jesus with those of Buddha or Buddhaghosa, or with those preserved to us in the Talmud and the Old Testament.

devoted to the exaltation of his own personality, in style and matter wholly unlike that of the synoptical reports. None of the characteristic parables of the first three Gospels appear in the Fourth, which, indeed, contains no proper example of this allegorical method of teaching. In the synoptics, particularly in the first two Gospels, the Jews appear as the kin and people of the writers, differing only as those who rejected the Messianic claims of Jesus would naturally differ from his disciples and followers. They are represented everywhere with entire naturalness. Their different sects, customs, and beliefs are truthfully described, as we know them from independent sources. The Fourth Gospel, on the contrary, is manifestly the product of one who was not himself a Jew. The Jews are spoken of in the third person, as an alien people, and in a contemptuous tone as children of the Evil One. The scribes, Sadducees, and Herodians, so often introduced in the synoptical narratives, do not appear at all in the Fourth Gospel. The natural and human Jesus of the synoptics is displaced by one who seems rather like a ghostly apparition, flitting aimlessly to and fro between Judea and Galilee. He is no longer the "Son of Man," moving naturally among his people, and speaking the language of their daily concern, but the pre-existent Logos, whose human parentage was an illusion, who existed even before the creation of the world, co-eternally with God himself. The representation of God as "our Father" and of all mankind as his children, so characteristic of the humane teaching of Jesus



in the synoptics, is supplanted in the Fourth Gospel by the everywhere intruded assumption of a special and supernatural relationship between Jesus and the Deity. The inclusive "our Father" gives place to the exclusive "my Father."

Artificial Theology of the Fourth Gospel.

The theology of the synoptics is natural and simple, though embodying the current anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine nature. That of the Fourth Gospel, on the contrary, is artificial and dogmatic. Its dualism is especially prominent and characteristic. Jesus, as the divine Logos, wages war against Satan and his emissaries, as Ormuzd against Ahriman in the Persian system. Faith in his supernatural character and mission is essential to salvation instead of conduct only, as in the synoptical tradition. The last supper, in the Fourth. Gospel, loses its natural interpretation as the paschal feast of the Jews, and takes on a character which prefigures its subsequent dogmatic importance as a Christian sacrament. To divest it of its Jewish characteristics, it is removed from the day of the paschal feast, the fourteenth of the month Nisan, to the preceding day; and Jesus himself appears as a substitute for the paschal lamb, sacrificed upon the anniversary of the Passover, instead of a day later, as represented in the synoptics. There are evidences, also, that the writer of the Fourth Gospel was even unacquainted with the topography of Palestine, which strongly favors the conclusion that the Apostle John neither wrote nor directly inspired it.

These considerations, which might be strengthened by other internal evidence, appear to render it impossible for us to accept the Fourth Gospel as a correct representation of the life, character, or teachings of the Prophet of Nazareth. For a true historical basis, we must "search the Scriptures" of the synoptics; relying mainly upon that consensus of testimony—those facts, ideas, and traditions which the three writers report in common—known to Biblical students as "The Triple Tradition." I have read with care, and with the respect due to so able and eminent an authority, the defence of the theory of the early appearance and Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel by Prof. Ezra Abbot; but his arguments, though subtle, refined, and exceedingly ingenious, are insufficient to my mind to explain away these very plain and evident discrepancies between this and the synoptical tradition.

The only portion of the Fourth Gospel narrative as presented to us in the accepted version of the New Testament differing from the synoptics, which instantly appeals to all readers as bearing the impress of the Jesus of the parables and the Sermon on the Mount, is the story of the woman taken in adultery; and this is known and admitted by the learned revisers of the New Testament to have formed no part of the original version of this document. It is omitted from the oldest extant manuscripts. It is, however, quoted by early Christian writers from the more primitive "Gospel of the Hebrews," and doubtless constituted a part of an older tradition than that

originally drawn upon by the writer of the Logos epic.*

The Patristic Literature and Early Apocryphal Gospels.

A correct understanding of the nature of our material for the study of the life and teachings of Jesus necessitates a brief inquiry as to the age and comparative reliability of the gospel narratives. The sources of our information in this investigation, in addition to such internal evidence as the documents themselves may furnish, must be sought in the writings of the Christian Fathers of the first three centuries. It is claimed by those who maintain an earlier authorship of the Gospels than the first quarter of the second century that they are recognized and quoted by the earliest non-canonical Christian writers. From a careful study of the patristic literature, however, it becomes evident that the narratives or memoranda thus quoted were never regarded as sacred Scripture in any such sense as were the writings of the Old Testament. It is also clear, upon examination, that the passages referred to are in no instance exact and literal excerpts from any extant manuscripts of our Gospels. Previous to the last quarter of the second century, moreover, no one of the canonical Gospels is identified in the writings of the Fathers by the titles now prefixed to them: so that, even were the alleged quotations in complete

*Renan, speaking of the irreconcilable difference between the Fourth Gospel and the synoptics, declares that he would "stake his future salvation upon it without the slightest hesitation."—*Recollections of my Youth*, by Ernest Renan.

agreement, it would be impossible to determine with certainty whether the excerpts were taken from our Gospels or from other documents whose language was in part identical with them.

Certain non-canonical writings, on the other hand, were undoubtedly extant, and were quoted by their titles before any of the canonical Gospels were so identified. One of the earliest of these writings was the "Gospel of the Hebrews," fragments of which have been preserved to us in the writings of the Fathers recently collected and collated by Dr. Nicholson. The "Gospel of the Infancy," preserved to us among other of the so-called "apocryphal" writings, was also so quoted at a very early period, and was accepted by a Gnostic sect of the second century as of equal authority and authenticity with our Fourth Gospel. Beside the writings of this character which we still possess, many others were doubtless in existence which are now lost. In support of this fact, indeed, we have the testimony of the New Testament itself. The writer of the Third Gospel declares: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, . . . it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus."

Besides forty or more primitive Gospels, the most of them known to us by their titles, there were also extant at a very early day a vast number of Epistles attributed to the apostles and early Fathers of the Church, together with such documents



as the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Andrew, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Revelations, respectively, of Peter, Paul, Bartholomew, Cerinthus, Stephen, Thomas, Moses, and Esdras, the sibylline oracles, and the Epistle of Christ to Abgarus, King of Edessa, and the reply thereto. Many of these documents are quoted as genuine and authoritative in the same writings of the Fathers from which are derived the supposed evidences of the early existence of our Gospels. Some of them are now known to be spurious. Others are doubtless genuine. A number of these extant writings have been published together as the *Apocryphal New Testament*, constituting, as affirmed by William Wake, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, "a complete collection of the most primitive antiquity, for about a hundred and fifty years after Christ." Whatever may be the adjudged value or worthlessness of this extensive literature in other respects, it is important, as testifying to the universal belief in the historical verity of Jesus of Nazareth during the earliest Christian centuries.

The Probable Age of the Canonical Gospels.

In regard to the testimony of the early Fathers of the Church, as bearing upon the probable age of the canonical Gospels, Prof. Davidson * asserts that "Papias (150 A.D.) knew nothing, so far as we can learn, of a New Testament canon. . . . He neither felt the want, nor knew the existence, of

* *The New Testament Canon.* By Samuel Davidson, D.D., LL.D. See also article in Encyclopædia Britannica.

inspired Gospels. . . . Justin Martyr's canon (150 A.D.), so far as divine authority and inspiration are concerned, was the Old Testament. . . . In his time, none of our Gospels had been canonized, not even the synoptics, if, indeed, he knew them all. Oral tradition was the chief fountain of Christian knowledge." Clement of Rome, the earliest of the Christian writers outside of the New Testament, quotes freely and frequently from the Old Testament and from other writings, probably apocryphal books now lost. His Epistle to the Corinthians, generally recognized as genuine, contains no quotation from the New Testament. It alludes, however, to certain "words of Jesus, our Lord," which are nowhere to be found in our canonical writings, and which must have been derived from lost Gospels or from oral tradition: "Remember the words of Jesus, our Lord, for he said: Woe unto that man. It were good for him if he had not been born, rather than that he should offend one of mine elect. It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about him, and he cast into the sea, than that he should pervert one of mine elect." * The superficial verbal resemblance of this passage to a familiar New Testament quotation, and also its notable variations therefrom, are evident at a glance. The so-called Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, documents of doubtful date and authorship, contain no New Testament quotations, or passages claimed to be such. The Apostolic Canons and Constitutions, formerly

* The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians may be found entire in the recently published *Christian Literature Primer*, No. I., "The Apostolic Fathers."



attributed to Clement, are now known to be of much later date, probably as late as the sixth century.

There are several extant versions of epistles ascribed to Ignatius of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom, as alleged, about 116 A.D. They are, however, of doubtful authenticity. The shorter and more probably genuine collection contains a few quotations which bear some resemblance to New Testament passages; but the language is not wholly identical with that of the Gospels, and no claim is made by the author that they are quoted therefrom. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, generally conceded to be genuine, contains numerous passages which conservative apologists regard as quotations from the canonical Gospels. In every instance, however, there are obvious deviations from the New Testament phraseology. A few instances will enable the reader to compare and judge for himself:—

"Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven you; be pitiful, that ye may be pitied; for with the measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. . . .

"Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing. . . .

"Blessed are the poor, and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of God."

These passages, like those contained in the first chapter of the recently published *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, present satisfactory evidence of the existence of a very early tradition, in many

respects similar to that embodied in our Gospels; but the manifest differences in language, together with the fact that they are nowhere referred to the books of the New Testament, forbid us to receive them as quotations therefrom.

Justin, who suffered martyrdom in the year 167 A.D., evidently knew nothing of our Gospels, though he quotes from certain *Memoirs of the Apostles*, of uncertain authorship and contents. The only genealogy of Jesus which he recognizes is traced through the Virgin Mary, whereas the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are both traced through Joseph. The only writing of the New Testament certainly identified by him is the Apocalypse, which he attributes to "a certain man whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation made to him." Unlike Papias, however, and the earlier Fathers, whose reliance was placed mainly on oral tradition, Justin evidently depends upon writings which he deems authoritative, and which contained much that our Gospels present, in a slightly modified form. His account of the occasion of the alleged birth of Jesus in Bethlehem agrees, in the main, with that of the Third Gospel, and ignores the totally irreconcilable tradition of the First Gospel. It differs from Luke, however, in representing Jesus to have been born in "a cave near the village," instead of in a manger near the inn in Bethlehem. This tradition is also preserved in some of the Apocryphal Gospels, but in none of those declared canonical. A comparison of many parallel passages from the writings of Justin and



our Gospels, made by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, demonstrates that Justin's version is almost always the terser and more abbreviated, which indicates that he drew probably from a more primitive tradition than that of the canonical Gospels.* In the writings of Hegisippus, a contemporary of Justin, there are a few similar verbal resemblances to the language of the New Testament. In no instance, however, is there absolute identity of expression.

Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, in Phrygia, during the first half of the second century, who died about 167 A.D., and who wrote, probably, about the middle of the century, was the first to mention a tradition that Mark and Matthew composed accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. We have already quoted the opinion of Dr. Davidson that he knew nothing of inspired Gospels or of a New Testament canon. It is evident also, from his descriptions, that he could not have known our First and Second Gospels as at present constituted. The writing of Mark, as described by him, was an Ebionitic document, more like the pseudo-Clementine Homilies than like our Gospel; and that of Matthew he asserts to have been written in Aramaic, whereas the original of our First Gospel was undoubtedly written in Greek. The writing known to Papias was probably the *Logia*, or record of the teachings of Jesus, ascribed

* Dr. Ezra Abbot argues learnedly that our Gospels, and especially the Fourth, were known to Justin Martyr. His arguments, however, do not appear conclusive. The numerous alleged resemblances to the Fourth Gospel in Justin's writings are more reasonably accounted for on the supposition of his acquaintance with the writings of Philo.

to Matthew, or some similar primitive document which may have served as the basis, in part, of our First Gospel. Papias placed little reliance on these writings, whatever they may have been. "I held," he says, "that what was to be derived from books did not profit me as that from the living and abiding voice."

The limits of this discussion forbid a detailed examination of all the passages which throw light upon the questions of the age and authenticity of the canonical Gospels. The author of *Supernatural Religion*, whose treatment of this subject is most thorough and exhaustive, and whose facts have never been successfully impugned, has placed side by side, in the original Greek, all the excerpts from the writings of the Fathers supposed to bear upon this question, with the corresponding New Testament passages. We may safely adopt, as our own, his conclusions: "After having exhausted the literature and testimony bearing on the point, we have not found a single distinct trace of any one of those Gospels during the first century and a half after the birth of Jesus. Only once during the whole of that period do we find any tradition even that any one of our Evangelists composed any gospel at all, and that tradition, so far from favoring our synoptics, is fatal to the claims of the First and the Second. . . . There is no other reference during the period to any writing of Matthew or Mark, and no mention at all of any writing ascribed to Luke. . . . Any argument for the mere existence of our synoptics, based upon their supposed rejection by heretical readers or

sects, has the inevitable disadvantage that the very testimony which would show their existence would oppose their authenticity. There is no evidence of their use, however, by heretical leaders, and no direct reference to them by any writer, heretical or orthodox."

The Earliest References to the Four Gospels.

Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul from 178 to 200 A.D., was the real founder of the Christian canon. He was the first to use our four Gospels exclusively. He also accepted the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Paul (rejecting Hebrews), the first Epistle of John, and the Apocalypse. Some of the remaining books of the New Testament he published in an appendix as of less authority, and some he ignored entirely. Irenæus thus explains why he accepted the four Gospels and no others:—

"It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four quarters of the earth in which we live and four universal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the 'pillar and ground' of the Church is the gospel and the spirit of life, it is fitting that she should have four pillars breathing out immortality on every side and vivifying men afresh. . . . Therefore, the Gospels are in accord with these things. . . . For the living creatures are quadriform, and the gospel is quadriform. . . . These things being so, all who destroy the form of the gospel are vain, unlearned, and audacious,—those, I mean,

who represent the aspects of the gospel as being either more in number than as aforesaid, or, on the other hand, fewer." The argument is certainly a remarkable, if not a convincing, one!

The Canon of Muratori, of uncertain date, but believed by conservative scholars to have been contemporary with the writings of Irenæus, also recognizes the four Gospels, and no others. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and the Christian writers of the third century generally did likewise, though they differed greatly among themselves as to the authenticity of other books afterward pronounced canonical. The four Gospels are also found in the ancient Syriac version of the New Testament, known as the Peshito, which Dr. Ezra Abbot* assigns to the latter part of the second century; and they were probably current in North Africa about this time, as is evidenced by their existence in the old Latin version. The genuineness of the Fourth Gospel, however, was still denied by a considerable section of the Christian Church, who are mentioned, and of course condemned, by Irenæus and other writers for their heresy. Epiphanius calls them, in contempt, Ἄλογοι,—a term which has the double meaning of "deniers of the Logos" and "men without reason."

The rational conclusion upon the whole matter appears to be that the four canonical Gospels became generally recognized as exclusively authoritative

*Dr. Abbot quotes approvingly from Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels* the opinion that at least sixty thousand copies of our Gospels were extant during the last quarter of the second century; but, since *not a single copy* of this period has descended to us, we may safely regard the opinion as baseless and extravagant.



in orthodox circles during the last quarter of the second century. Though we have no positive evidence of their existence before this time, it is reasonable to presume that they were compiled, and existed pretty nearly in their present shape, some years previous to their general acceptance, having originally been used by different and widely separated communities, and, therefore, on account of their local use and origin, not being generally known. At the same time, there were other Gospels, some of them of earlier origin, which were similarly regarded as authoritative by certain sections of the Church, though neither these nor our canonical Gospels were at first looked upon as sacred or inspired writings like the Old Testament, or even as of equal value with oral tradition. None of them probably existed during the lifetime of any of the Apostles, nor can be traced with certainty to their personal influence or inspiration.

From the general consent of the tradition preserved in the first three Gospels, and its agreement, in the main, with the information transmitted to us from other sources, such as the primitive Gospel of the Hebrews and the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, we may conclude that the main features of the picture of the life and teachings of Jesus which they present to us, when freed from its evident mythical accretions, may be accepted as historically trustworthy. The numerous though minor differences in the synoptical narratives which forbid the conception of collusion between their authors, and the consequent rational

probability that they originated in diverse localities, and reported a generally prevalent and universally accepted tradition, renders them in the main reliable, though anonymous, witnesses. Yet we must admit, in all candor, with a recent able writer,* that we cannot affirm, with absolute certainty, of any single word attributed to Jesus that he spoke it exactly as recorded. With the author of *The Cradle of the Christ*, we may recognize the fact that the features of the historical Jesus have been so obscured by legendary accretions, which enter into the popular evangelical conception of the ideal Christ, that it is a problem for the nicest and most accurate critical analysis to separate the one from the other, and thereby reveal the truth of history. Fortunately, however, the accurate scholarship of the present generation has furnished us with a rational clew to the legendary labyrinth of the Gospels.

The Testimony of Josephus and the Pagan Historians.

Of contemporaneous references to Jesus, as has been remarked, there exists not a single one. Josephus, the Jewish historian, writing at about the close of the first century, possibly alludes to him in a passage where he is reported as referring to "James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ." The longer passage, written in the tone of a Christian believer, in strong contrast with every other portion of the writings of Josephus, is now admitted by all candid critics, whether of the

*Rev. John W. Chadwick, in *The Bible of To-day*.



orthodox or the liberal faith, to be an interpolation. Josephus, however, gives us an interesting account of the character, preaching, and death of John the Baptist in passages of unquestioned authenticity, tending to confirm the impressions of that remarkable man obtained from the glimpses of him afforded by the gospel narratives, and thus, indirectly, to confirm the general truth of the Christian tradition.

The earliest references to Jesus in the writings of the Roman historians date from the early part of the second century, and are exceedingly brief and unsatisfactory, tending only to confirm the facts of his existence and of his tragical death. Suetonius alludes to him as "one Chrestus, a Jew, who stirred up tumults in Rome" at the time of the Emperor Claudius. A longer passage from Tacitus,* of doubtful authenticity, but generally accepted as genuine by Christian historians, adds but little to our information, and is valuable only as confirmation of the general belief of the period in the existence of Jesus as an historical personage. The younger Pliny, about 104 A.D., writes from Bythinia, of which province he was the Roman governor, an interesting account of the Christians who resided in that neighborhood, but adds nothing to our knowledge of the life and work of Jesus.†

We must turn then to the Synoptical Gospels as

*Tacitus speaks of the Jews as a people "without religion," and regards Christianity as *exitiabilis superstitio*,—"a miserable superstition." He says that Jesus was "executed, in the reign of Tiberias, by the procurator, Pontius Pilate," thus confirming the gospel narrative.

†He speaks of Christianity as *prava et immodica superstitio*.

our only reliable source of information concerning the religion of Jesus. We may recognize the probability that the author of the Fourth Gospel built up his doctrinal system around an extant local tradition of the life of Jesus, differing in some respects from that of the synoptics, and in others confirming the testimony of the first three Gospels. The additional features, however, which constitute the main part of this Gospel, for reasons already given, we cannot regard as trustworthy. To the Epistles of Paul, we may go for a history of the remarkable development of doctrine and expansion of the universalizing tendencies in the new religion which occurred under his leadership and inspiration, to the Apostolic Fathers for the succeeding phase of the growing faith, and to the Christian writers, the Gnostics, and the contemporary pagan historians and scholars of later periods, for its subsequent development.

The Relative Age and Tendencies of the Canonical Gospels.

Concerning the relative age, purport, and reliability of the Gospels, widely different views have prevailed in the past, and still prevail, among Biblical scholars. The most rational conclusion appears to be that which regards Mark, our Second Gospel, as the earliest in composition, Matthew the second, and, but little later in time, Luke the third, and John, or the Fourth Gospel, the last in the order of time. Those critics who consider that the exaltation of the personality of Jesus, and the more frequent use of the term, "the Son



of God," in Mark, indicate a later development of Christology, would place Matthew before Mark in chronological order, as does Keim.* Those who regard Luke as merely an expansion of Marcion's Gospel would place the Third Gospel before either Mark or Matthew. This view is adopted by Waite, Keeler, and other recent liberal writers. The arguments in favor of the priority of Mark, presented by Dr. E. A. Abbott, the writer of the article on the Gospels in the Encyclopædia Britannica, by Renan, and other able and competent critics, appear to me, however, to be conclusive and unanswerable. Dr. Abbott regards this view as the most satisfactorily demonstrated proposition in New Testament controversy.

The principal reasons for accepting the priority of Mark may thus be briefly stated :—

1. Its style is more crude and primitive than that of either of the other canonical Gospels. Its Greek is more corrupt. It reports certain of the sayings of Jesus in the original Aramaic in which they were spoken. It was written probably by a Jewish Christian, of no great pretensions to scholarship, but familiar with both the Greek and the Aramaic languages.

2. It is the shortest and least systematic in its arrangement of all the biographies of Jesus. It contains only twenty-four verses not also found in Matthew and Luke. This would naturally be the fact, if the last-named Gospels were written later, using either Mark, or the material from which

* *The History of Jesus of Nazara*, by Prof. Theodor Keim,—one of the most valuable and interesting historical studies of the New Testament period.

Mark was compiled, as a basis. The later writers would naturally use much of the material of the earlier, adding to it such facts or modifications of these original statements as they should deem important.

3. Luke and Mark contain matter in common which is not found in Matthew; Matthew and Mark also contain matter in common not found in Luke; but Matthew and Luke contain no matter in common which is not also found in a slightly modified form in Mark. This condition of affairs is hardly explainable upon any theory save that of the priority of Mark.

4. The supernatural element is less developed in Mark than in either of the other Gospels. The stories of the miraculous birth are wholly wanting, and also the story of the resurrection and ascension; the final verses of the concluding chapter not being found in the earliest manuscripts, and being, doubtless, a later addition by a different author.

5. The term "Son of God," as applied to Jesus in the Second Gospel, is not, as some assume, an evidence of developed Christology, but the contrary. It was the common designation of the members of the "kingdom of God," the regenerate Jewish state. It is used in this natural sense in the Fourth Gospel, in some of the Epistles, and in early Hebrew writings.* "The genesis of Jesus as Son of God," says Prof. Allen, "precedes his genesis as the Messiah of the Jews." †

*Notably, in the writings of Philo, of earlier date than any of the New Testament literature.

†*Christian History*, by Joseph Henry Allen, Professor in Cornell University, late lecturer in the Harvard Divinity School.



The Gospels are all what are known to scholars as "tendency writings"; that is to say, they have each some ulterior motive and object beyond that of making a clear and succinct statement of historical truth. Thus, the writer of Mark aims, above all, to exalt and magnify the human personality of Jesus. The tradition which refers its authorship to a personal follower of the Apostle Peter is significant and not improbable. Its character is such as we would naturally anticipate, if inspired by contact with one who had seen and known the Master.

The writer of the First Gospel (Matthew) aims to present Jesus in the character of the Messiah of the Jews, fulfilling the alleged Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Its style of composition is less natural and more mechanical than that of Mark. It presents distinct evidences of manufacture, and the free use of older documents which are apparently wrought into its structure with little alteration. Some of them even embody contradictory traditions, as the genealogy of Jesus, which names Joseph as his father, and the inconsistent birth-story of the early chapters. The short sentences and aphorisms scattered through the Second and Third Gospels are collected into the "Sermon on the Mount," in Matthew. The story of the birth of Jesus and the reports of his public career are arranged with special reference to the fulfilment of Messianic prophecies.

The author of the Third Gospel presents Jesus as the Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles, emphasizing his relation toward the latter. He traces the

genealogy of Jesus not only to Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, as in Matthew, but back of him to Adam, the father of the human race. He also relates the story of the healing of the Syro-Phœnician woman and the parable of the good Samaritan, illustrative of the universal or Pauline tendency of this Gospel. He makes Jesus send out not only the twelve apostles to the twelve tribes of Israel, as in Mark and in Matthew, but also seventy others, to every nation of the earth. The style of the Third Gospel is more finished and elegant, and its contents are more orderly in their arrangement than either the First or the Second.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the eternally existent, incarnate Logos, the maker of the world, and its supernatural redeemer. To this end, he omits the birth-stories as unnecessary to his purpose, and completely subordinates historical accuracy. A ghostly apparition, exalting his own spiritual office and supernatural power, and placing supreme emphasis on dogmatic statements of truth, takes the place of the living man, calling his fellow-men to salvation through righteousness.

In their quotations from the Old Testament, the gospel writers most frequently make use of the Septuagint version, as would be natural in a Greek writing. Mark and Matthew, however, sometimes vary from the renderings of the Septuagint, making, apparently, a direct translation from some extant Aramaic version of the Scriptures, either oral or written. Mark's renderings of Scriptural passages are freer and less literal than those of Matthew.



Bearing in mind the nature of these, our only sources of information concerning the life and teachings of the Nazarene Prophet, we will attempt hereafter to draw therefrom a just and true conception of his work, his doctrine, and his personality. If, haply, beneath the legendary accretions of an unscientific age and an uncritical people, through the false lights of a tendency literature, the composition of which was instigated by other aims than that of historical accuracy, we shall nevertheless be able to discover the features of a man in all respects like unto such as we are, but with a soul on fire with a righteous and unselfish purpose to elevate and save his fellowmen,—then, in the satisfaction and encouragement of this discovery, we need not repine at the vanishing of a god.

IV.

THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS.

It is our purpose, in this and the succeeding lecture, to give as clear and distinct a presentation as possible of the salient points in the life and teachings of Jesus. As has already been foreshadowed, our chief, I may almost say our sole, reliance will be placed upon the Synoptic Gospels, especially upon that consensus of statement known as the Triple Tradition. Next to that, we shall accept as most reliable the separate statements of Mark and Matthew, and, after them, of Luke. The Fourth Gospel will be deemed of value to us only in so far as it confirms the synoptical tradition in certain particulars, and also in so far as it throws light upon the question of the natural growth of Christian doctrine, and of the mythical and miraculous legends which gathered around the human life of the founder of Christianity, as they have also gathered around and partially obscured the lives of other religious teachers. Omitting this portion of our subject for the present for separate treatment hereafter, all that we really know of the life of Jesus and of his theological beliefs may be briefly sketched.

Unhistorical and Unreliable Character of the Birth Stories.

Of his early history, our information is extremely limited. He was born, doubtless, in Nazareth,* a small hillside town in Galilee, from three to eight years before the first year of our era, as at present improperly reckoned. Herod the Great died about four years before the commencement of the Christian era; and, if the tradition, which assigns the birth of Jesus to his reign, can be deemed reliable, the question of his earlier birth is definitely settled. The exact year, however, or time of the year, is absolutely unknown. The earlier tradition fixed the spring as the season of his birth. The final acceptance of the 25th of December, some centuries later, grew out of the substitution of the Christian festivities for the Roman Saturnalia and Mithraic festivals, which occurred at the period of the winter solstice, and celebrated the triumph of the god of light in the growing day. This day had long been known among the Romans as *dies natalis solis invicti*,—the birthday of the conquering sun.

The stories of the birth in Bethlehem are mutually contradictory and irreconcilable. They are not even mentioned in Mark, the oldest of the Gospels, or in the Fourth Gospel. They are alluded to nowhere in the other Gospels except in the contradictory accounts of the opening chapters. Matthew† states that the family of Joseph first

*Mark: i., 9, 24; vi., 4; x., 47; xiv., 67; xvi., 6; Matt.: iv., 13; xxi., 11; xxvi., 71; Luke: iv., 16, 23, 24; xviii., 37; xxiii., 6, 7; xxiv., 19; John: i., 45, 46; iv., 44; xix., 19, etc.

†Chapter ii.

lived in Bethlehem of Judea, fled to Egypt to avoid the massacre of infants ordered by King Herod, and on their return thence chose Nazareth in Galilee as their home, from fear of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod. Luke,* on the contrary, represents them as dwelling originally in Nazareth, and going to Bethlehem, the home of their ancestors, to be enrolled for taxation. He knows nothing of the journey into Egypt reported by Matthew. There is no historical evidence of any enrolment or assessment of taxes at the time alleged by Luke, or of any custom which required families to be enrolled at the home of their ancestors instead of their own dwelling-place.† The only assessment of which we have any information occurring near this period took place ten or more years subsequent to the death of Herod, and not until after the deposition of Archelaus. The massacre of the children is also a wholly unhistorical and improbable legend. Josephus, who willingly records everything which bears against the character of Herod, knows nothing of this occurrence. Similar stories are related of Krishna, one of the avatars or incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu, of Moses, the Hebrew law-giver, and of Sargon, an Akkadian king,—all probably referable to current solar mythologies for their explanations. The legend of the birth in Bethlehem grew, probably, out of a misrepresentation of a passage in Micah (v., 2), erroneously supposed to be a prophecy of the Messiah.

* Chapter ii.
† See Josephus and later Jewish historians. Also Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, etc.



The Parentage and Ancestry of Jesus.

The parents of Jesus were Joseph and Mary,* humble Galilean peasants. Except in the contradictory legends of Matthew and Luke, and in the still more extravagant and incredible stories of the Apocryphal Gospels, we have no confirmation of any contemporary belief in the miraculous birth of a virgin. This story conflicts with the genealogies contained in these early chapters of the First and Third Gospels, which trace the lineage of Jesus through Joseph as his natural father. The Nazarenes, or Ebionites,—a very early sect of Jewish Christians, who numbered among themselves the descendants of the family of Jesus,—rejected this legend, which doubtless grew out of the misinterpretation of an Old Testament text.†

Joseph and Mary probably had a considerable family of children, the brothers and sisters of Jesus,‡—a fact frequently recognized by the Evangelists, and also by the writers of the Apocryphal Gospels. James, the brother of Jesus, subsequently became a recognized leader of the Nazarenes, or Jewish sect of Christians. Some early writers suppose Joseph to have been a widower with children before his marriage with Mary; others, that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were all younger than himself. But these suppositions are wholly conjectural: we really know nothing in regard to the matter.

* Matt.: i., 16; xiii., 55; Luke: iii., 23: iv., 22, etc.

† Isaiah vii., 14. The word mistranslated "virgin" means literally "young woman." The text has really no Messianic significance or reference to any event in the remote future. See Kuenen, *Bible for Learners*, etc.

‡ Mark vi., 3, etc.

We have no reliable evidence that Jesus bore any relationship to David or the royal line of Israel. His birth and residence in Galilee, out of the region allotted to the tribe to which David and Solomon belonged, would tend to discredit this tradition, which doubtless grew up after the rôle of the Jewish Messiah had been assigned to Jesus. In the Triple Tradition, indeed, he appears expressly to disclaim this ancestry, arguing in favor of his own Messianic pretensions that, since David called the Messiah his Lord, he could not therefore be his son or descendant.*

His Early Life and Occupations.

The father of Jesus was a carpenter; and early traditions, both of the canonical and Apocryphal Gospels, represent Jesus as working with him at his trade.† With the single exception of the story of his contest with the rabbis in the temple, recorded in the Third Gospel,‡ which reminds us of a similar legend in the life of Buddha, we have absolutely no reliable tradition of his early life. The early maturity of Jewish youth makes this legend not wholly improbable, though it would appear more reasonable to assign the locality of the occurrence, if it ever happened, to some Galilean synagogue, rather than to the temple at Jerusalem. At the synagogue and the schools connected therewith, Jesus was doubtless instructed in the Law and the Prophets, according to the uncritical methods of interpretation then in

* Mark xii., 35–37; Matt. xxii., 41–46; Luke xx., 41–44.
† Mark vi., 3, etc. ‡ Luke ii., 41–52.

vogue; and here also he may have learned something of the disputations of the rabbis of the different Pharisaical schools. There is no evidence, however, that he received any general or secular education, or that he knew any language save his native Syro-Chaldaic tongue.

The Relations of Jesus with John the Baptist.

The oldest Gospel opens with a brief account of his conversion and baptism by John the Baptist, an episode in his life which is confirmed in the triple tradition, as well as by the character of his subsequent teaching, and may be accepted as historical.* The stories of the Third Gospel concerning the birth of John the Baptist, and the assumption of his relationship to Jesus,† must, however, be rejected,—not merely because of their miraculous implications, but because they are irreconcilable with the more reliable account of the later relations of John and Jesus contained in the synoptics. The tradition that John recognized Jesus at the time of his baptism as one greater than himself—as the Messiah of the Jews ‡—is wholly discredited by the consenting testimony of the synoptical writers. If these legends had had any foundation in fact, John, when in prison, would never have had occasion to send his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he who should come, or do we look for another?" §

We must believe that Jesus was profoundly impressed by the teaching of this remarkable man.

* Mark i., 1-11; compare Matt. iii., 1-17; Luke iii., 1-22.
† Luke i. ‡ Matt. iii., 14, 15, etc.
§ Matt. xi., 2-6; Luke vi., 18-23.

His impassioned exhortations to repentance, his announcement of the speedy coming of the Messianic kingdom, his stern denunciation of the Pharisees and Sadducees as "a generation of vipers," his condemnation of riches and extortion, his advocacy of a simple communistic life, are all notably characteristic of the subsequent life and public teachings of the Prophet of Nazareth.* His initiation to discipleship by the ceremony of immersion, preceded by a confession of sins, to which Jesus himself submitted, though not administered thereafter to others by the founder of Christianity, was adopted by his disciples, and became a solemn rite of the earliest Christian communities.†

The public career of Jesus, according to the synoptical writers, lasted only about one year. The Fourth Gospel would extend this period to more than three years; but, brief as the former time appears, we have no rational option but to accept the necessary inference from the consenting accounts of the synoptics. It is of the theological or religious aspect of his teaching during this short period of his public labors that we propose now to treat, leaving its social and ethical phases for subsequent consideration.

The Story of the Temptation.

We may infer from the legend of the temptation that Jesus withdrew into the wilderness after his baptism, as was the custom of the Essenes, the

* Matt. iii., 7-12; Luke iii., 7-18.
† Mark i., 4; Luke iii., 3, et seq.



disciples of John the Baptist, the Buddhist monks, and Hindu ascetics, for a period of fasting and solitary meditation. That he should there be tempted "of Satan," and ministered unto by angels, as briefly reported by Mark,* was quite in concurrence with the popular beliefs of his time and people. This general and indefinite statement of the oldest Gospel, confined to two brief verses, is expanded into the long and circumstantial accounts of the contest between Jesus and the devil, in eleven verses of Matthew and thirteen of Luke,† wherein the enemy and Saviour of mankind are made to quote Scripture at each other with the facility of modern antagonistic sectarians, the only evident point of superiority lying in the fact that Jesus has the last word, and his antagonist retires discomfited. The growth of the longer and less natural version of the story out of a possible and natural fact introductory to his career as a public teacher, and its consequent legendary and unhistorical character, are too reasonable and apparent to require more than the simple statement of the record in confirmation thereof.

It is natural to suppose that the contact of Jesus with the Baptist, and his subsequent solitary meditations, greatly intensified certain convictions and impulses which had long been growing within him. His belief in the speedy coming of the heavenly kingdom—an event everywhere anticipated in the synoptics as about to occur in the then living generation—dominated his thought and controlled his life thereafter. It involved the current concep-

* Mark i., 12, 13. † Matt. iv., 1-11; Luke iv., 1-13.

tion,—derived, probably, from the Persian popular belief,—that the old order of things was to pass speedily away, the world was to be renovated by fire, and a new and eternal kingdom was to be established, wherein the just would live forever in perfect security and happiness. God himself, the "heavenly Father," would be the ruler of this heavenly kingdom. The Messiah, or Deliverer, would sit at his right hand and render judgment to all mankind according to the deserts of their past lives.

Jewish Conception of the Character of God.

The conception of the Deity popularly held among the Jews at the time of Jesus was still strongly anthropomorphic, though less grossly so than that which we find exemplified in the earlier writings of the Old Testament. The harsher elements in the character of Yahweh had been modified, and the conception of his nature broadened and spiritualized by the experiences of the Jews during and subsequent to the Babylonian captivity. Doubtless, something of this result is due to the exalted spiritual conception of Ahura-Mazda held by the Persians, and perhaps also in some degree, though less evidently, to the broadening and liberalizing influence of Hellenic culture. The stern, jealous, tribal God of the Old Testament, resembling an Oriental despot in his character and dealings with men, had given place to one who was the God of all the earth, the Father of his chosen people, and, through their exaltation and supremacy among the nations, some time to be recognized



as the Father and Ruler of the world. In its loftiest phase, as illustrated in the teachings of the later prophets and the more enlightened of the rabbis, the highest service of this heavenly Father was made to consist, not in sacrifice or ceremonial, but in the doing of righteousness.

Jesus' Doctrine of the Heavenly Father.

More fully than any of his contemporaries did Jesus inherit the spirit and sublime ethical purpose of the prophets. He regarded the Pharisaic formalism of the times as superficial and displeasing to the heavenly Father, and sought to bring his people to the heavenly kingdom by stimulating them to live righteous and true lives. He believed firmly in the special, watchful providence of God. Yahweh, in his thought, had a loving, personal care over all his children. Not even a sparrow could fall to the ground without his notice. He dealt blessings upon all with an even hand. He made his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good alike: he sent his rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Whatever of estrangement there was between men and the heavenly Father was due, therefore, not to the harshness and severity of his government, but solely to the wickedness or wilful perversity of man.

The Character and Efficacy of Prayer.

The God of Jesus is omniscient, knowing all human needs without man's solicitation. Yet he delights to hear and answer the prayer of faith. Whatever is asked of him in a childlike and sub-

missive spirit, in a spirit of utter self-abnegation and trust, he will grant, though it involve such a physical miracle as the removal of a mountain. Yet, though Jesus held this perfect faith that the Father would answer the sincere prayer of a trustful heart, the long prayers of the Pharisees in the synagogues and public places, their "much speaking" and "vain repetition," were held by him in abhorrence. It was only upon the importunity of his disciples that he consented to give them that simple formula for supplication known to us as "the Lord's Prayer." Even this was not to be used in public or formal repetition. The disciples were commanded to retire into their closets, to pray in secret, that the Father who seeth in secret might reward them openly.*

This habit of complete privacy in prayer, which he commended to his disciples, was evidently in accordance with his own consistent practice. He sent away his disciples, and "departed into a mountain" to pray. He knelt alone in the wilderness and in desert places; and only in a few short ejaculations, drawn from him as in the agony of crucifixion, do we find him giving utterance to supplications to God in the presence of others.† The differentiation of modern Christianity from the religion of Jesus is in no respect more notable than in its universal custom of formal praying at set times and in public places.

* Matt. vi., 5–15; compare Luke xi., 1–13, etc. See also Mark xi., 22–26.

† Mark: vi., 46; xiv., 32–40; Matt. xxvi., 36–45; Luke: ix., 18; xxii., 41–45, etc.



The Unitarianism of Jesus.

In his thought of God there is nothing of polytheistic or trinitarian implication. He accepted fully the lofty Unitarianism* of the Hebrew lawgiver from whom he quotes, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal our God, the Eternal is one." To this high and lofty One, merciful as well as just, all-seeing, caring for the humblest of his creatures, was due the love of the whole heart of man, his child. The conception of himself or of another as a Son of God in any exclusive or supernatural sense, of a God coming upon earth in human form, would have been as abhorrent and unnatural to Jesus as it has ever been to his people. The trinitarian dogma is a belief as impossible to the true Israelite as any other form of polytheism or idolatry. In its later Christian development, it is a purely Aryan philosophical conception, and entered Christianity from other than Jewish sources. In this respect, there is no reason to believe that Jesus was anything but a Hebrew of the Hebrews, —"an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." God alone is good, he said, rejecting the appellation "Good Master." Yet he held up the perfections of the divine character as a model and example for human endeavor in that most exigent and lofty exhortation to noble living,—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

Jesus' Doctrine of the Future Life.

The thought of Jesus concerning God, however,

* It need scarcely be said that we use this word with no narrow or sectarian meaning.

has another side than this attractive and winning one,—the side of inexorable justice and severity toward the wrong-doer, which is involved in his conception of the future life. The modern doctrine of a spiritual immortality for all men is nowhere explicitly taught by him; nor does he anywhere definitely describe the state of the righteous after death. We are left to infer his belief from the character of his allegorical descriptions, and from information elsewhere derived of the current conception of his time and people. His kingdom of heaven was evidently an earthly kingdom,—no far-away abode of the sublimated spirit apart from material conditions, no misty Nirvâna like that of the Buddhists. Accepting the current Pharisaic notion of a future life upon the earth, involving the conception of a bodily resurrection, he believed not only in the establishment of the heavenly kingdom, with its joys ineffable for the righteous, but also, if we may accept the record, in the eternal punishment of the unrepentant sinner in the fires of Gehenna. Nay, more. He taught that the few only were destined for salvation and happiness. The many would "depart into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels." The dread abode of the wicked is sometimes characterized as "eternal fire," sometimes as "outer darkness," in which there would be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."* These expressions, similar to those which we find in the later Egyptian inscriptions, descriptive of

* Matt. xviii., 8, 9; Mark ix., 45, 46; compare Luke xvi., 19-27; also Matt.: xx., 16; xxii., 13, 14; xxiii., 34; xxv., 30, 41-46, etc.

the place of future punishment, may possibly be regarded as strong figures to describe a condition of torment which would otherwise be inconceivable, though they appear to have been interpreted very literally by the early disciples and Fathers of the Church. The physical character of his entire conception of the life hereafter, moreover, would appear to discredit this more lenient interpretation. Whatever the exact nature of the future state of the wicked might be, it was evidently one of conscious, unlimited suffering in the thought of Jesus. I would willingly accept, if it were possible, the ingenious explanation of our Universalist friends, who interpret the teaching of Jesus as to the duration of this suffering as meaning "age-long," or for the length of an æon,—a long, indefinite, but limited period,—but this modification of the terrible sentence of the wicked from the mouth of Jesus rests solely upon the doubtful interpretation of a word in a language which he neither wrote nor spoke. In the absence of any explicit doctrine of ultimate restoration, and in view of the general consensus of opinion in the Church in all ages of the world, the Universalist interpretation scarcely appears rational or acceptable.

The salvation of men, however, in the teaching of Jesus, depended upon the acceptance of no dogmatic standard of truth, but solely upon righteous living. "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom." "This *do*," not *this believe*, "and ye shall be saved."

Herein, Jesus stood upon both Jewish and rational ground; for it is the teaching of the highest ethical philosophy of the present day, as well as of Israel's prophets, that supreme happiness is possible only to those who "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." The popular Christian doctrine of a vicarious atonement and substituted righteousness has no place either in the teachings of the Nazarene prophet or in the ethics of Kant or Spencer.

Jesus' Belief in Demoniacal Influences.

Together with the doctrine of eternal punishment, Jesus also accepted the current superstitions of the existence of a personal devil, and of the possibility of possession or obsession by evil spirits. The word "devil" is doubtless of Aryan origin. It is not found in the Old Testament. The devil of the later Judaism was identified with the Hebrew *Shethan*, or Satan, a mythical personage who first appears in Job as one among the "sons of God," a trusted messenger and servant of Yahweh. From his early character of adversary or accuser, a sort of prosecuting attorney of Yahweh's court, he had fallen, under the influence of the Persian dualism, to the position of an arch-enemy of God and man. His prototype, Set or Seth, in the Egyptian mythology, experienced a similar deterioration after the Persian conquest of Egypt.

The alleged facts which have been held to justify the belief in demoniacal possession, which the Jews brought with them from Babylon, doubtless

find their rational explanation in the phenomena common to certain nervous disorders, such as epilepsy and hysteria, which prevail in a more aggravated form among a rude, ignorant, and superstitious population than under more favorable social conditions. It is this class of disorders which is especially susceptible to the influence of a powerful will, or that little comprehended but very positive agency popularly known as hypnotism, or "animal magnetism." We shall treat this subject hereafter in our discussion of the mythical and miraculous elements in the gospel narratives. It is sufficient at present merely to allude to these facts as the probable natural basis for the belief honestly held by Jesus and many of his contemporaries in demoniacal influences, and in the efficacy of his own power for their cure or amelioration.

The Relation of Jesus to the Current Messianic Expectation.

In the earlier part of the public career of Jesus, he appears to have been moved solely by the profound necessity imposed upon him by the belief in the speedy advent of the heavenly kingdom, and by his perception that the masses of his people were totally unprepared for this great change. He took up the message of John the Baptist, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and preached it to the common people, the despised "people of the land," who, neglected by the more rigorous Pharisaic teachers, appealed strongly to the sympathetic nature of the Galilean prophet. Such as these

eagerly listened to his teaching, and "heard his message gladly." By parable and apt illustration, he described his vision of the heavenly kingdom, and impressed upon his hearers the duty of instant preparation in view of the immanence of the great change. He appears to have had little thought at first of the Messianic expectation as being fulfilled in his own person. He was the prophet of the heavenly kingdom,—the "Son of God," which meant simply the faithful citizen and messenger of God's kingdom.

The people, however, full of the hope for a coming deliverer, impressed by the earnestness of his appeals, the depth and purity of his moral nature, his strong, magnetic personality, soon hailed him as the Messiah. The thought grew upon him. What if he was indeed the chosen one of Israel, the "anointed of Yahweh," the immediate herald of the coming change? When the populace greeted him as the Son of David, in accordance with the popular expectation that the Messiah would spring from the royal line of Israel, he at first questions his disciples: "But whom say *ye* that I am?" Upon their recognition of him as the Messiah, he does not indeed directly repel the honor, but cautions them that they tell no man of this thing. A little later, we find that the idea has taken full possession of him; for we discover him arguing in favor of his own Messianic pretensions that the Messiah cannot be the "Son of David," since David calls him his Lord or Master.

At the time of his final journey to Jerusalem, he has become fully convinced of his Messianic



mission. He accepts the plaudits of the people during his triumphal entry into the city, and his subsequent bearing before and during his trial and crucifixion likewise attests the sincerity of his belief. It is not impossible that he expected some miraculous interposition to prevent the final catastrophe, as would be indicated, apparently, by the despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark, who comes nearer to the primitive tradition than either of the other evangelists, reports this and certain other notable expressions of Jesus in his native Syro-Chaldaic tongue. This agonized expression, so natural and human, but so unlike the supernatural Jesus of the Fourth Gospel and our popular Christian conception, could hardly have crept into the gospel narrative, unless it had some foundation in the actual occurrence. The writer of the First Gospel confirms the tradition of Mark; but Luke, illustrating an advanced development of Christology, omits this human cry of almost despairing agony, and substitutes for it the calm acceptance of the inevitable in the final words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The still less natural and more dramatic writer of the Logos epic makes Jesus die with the dignity and supernatural endurance of a God, fully self-conscious to the last, and deliberately conforming his actions on the cross to the fulfilment of Scripture:—

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with

vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

Concluding Thoughts.

In this lecture, we have attempted, fairly, with no bias of preconceived opinions, to set forth the leading features in the teaching of Jesus on its theological side, as reported in the Synoptical Gospels. While recognizing the fine humanity of his doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the profound sincerity of all his beliefs, there is evidently much in this teaching which the liberal and cultured thought of modern times has forever discarded, much that bears the impress of a primitive and ignorant age and of a narrow and restricted intellectual environment. For us there is no encompassing host of demons, no personal prince of evil, no bodily resurrection, no eternal kingdom of immortals to be established upon the earth. If we still hold to the fatherhood and personality of God, it is in quite a different sense from that embodied in the simple, anthropomorphic conception of Jesus. The Messianic doctrine of the Jews is to us a beautiful dream, which the Prophet of Nazareth did not fully realize either according to the popular expectation or his own more spiritual interpretation. Not in any of these theological conceptions do we find the secret of the influence of Jesus upon the life and thought of later generations.

In this brief review, we have discovered no strik-

ing deviation in the thought of Jesus from the current beliefs of his time and people. Herein, at least, there are none of the distinctive features of the peculiar philosophy of Buddhism,—no hint of Hindu agnosticism or of the doctrine of the Nirvâna as the *summum bonum* of human aspiration. The entire atmosphere of the primitive tradition of the synoptics, after eliminating such of its supernatural and mythological elements as are not confirmed by the consent of the three writers, is Hebrew, and Hebrew only. The Prophet of Nazareth moves naturally in the Palestine of eighteen centuries ago: he breathes its peculiar religious and social atmosphere, and incarnates its loftiest moral and personal characteristics. Though transcending the ritualistic formalism of his time and the traditional limitations of his national religion, we may, nevertheless, repeat as a truth of history his own judgment of his relation to the law and religion of his people,—He came not to antagonize or to destroy, but to fulfil.

V.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS.

Jesus' Doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE religion of Jesus would by no means be adequately viewed or comprehended in its entirety, if regard were had only to its technically religious or theological aspect. Beside its Godward look, its attitude toward the current supernaturalism of the time, its relations of consent or negation toward the ancient faith of his people, it had also its manward look, its ethical and social side. In entering upon a consideration of this phase of the thought and teaching of the Galilean prophet, we would completely fail to understand it, to give its several precepts their proper force and correct interpretation, if we neglected again, and even more clearly and emphatically than heretofore, to strike the key-note of his entire system of thought, as it is revealed to us in his doctrine of the kingdom of heaven and its speedy advent.

In his general conception of the heavenly kingdom as a new spiritual and social order to be established on the earth, with the will of the heavenly Father for its sole and perfect law, with all

evil and hurtful conditions completely overcome and destroyed; the necessity for toil obviated by the constant production of all necessary articles of food through the spontaneous fruitfulness of the regenerated earth; the cessation of war and conflict; the destruction even of death itself by the complete eradication of sin through which death had come into the world,—Jesus did not apparently differ from many of the earnest and faithful followers of Judaism in his generation, among the different sects of the Pharisees and the "people of the land." Pictures of this "good time coming" were drawn from the older prophets, and exaggerated by the glowing imagination of the hopeful and faithful representatives of the faith of Israel.

"It shall come to pass at the end of days that the mountain of Yahweh's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke among many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

*Isaiah ii., 2-4.

In the writings of the rabbis, we find wonderful pictures of this heavenly kingdom. Wild animals are to become tame and harmless, "the lion and the lamb shall lie down together"; immense bunches of grapes are to burden the vines; springs of living water are to burst from the barren rock, as under the rod of Moses, at the desire of whosoever may thirst; and life is to be a continual round of "delight in the law of the Lord." There are many evidences, outside the New Testament, that this expectation was held by the early Christians as well as by the Jews. Irenæus, writing during the latter part of the second century, declares that Papias, an earlier Christian writer, quotes from the memoirs of the apostles, as genuine words of Jesus, this saying: "The day shall come when each vine shall grow with ten thousand boughs, each bough with ten thousand branches, each branch with ten thousand twigs, each twig with ten thousand bunches, each bunch with ten thousand grapes, each grape shall yield twenty-five measures of wine."

The Speedy Advent of the Heavenly Kingdom.

The special thought of Jesus, that wherein he differed from many of the Jews around him, that which impelled him to his prophetic labor and which dominated and gave color to his ethical system, was the profound conviction that this great change was "at hand." * It was coming *now*,—in *this generation*. "There be some standing here which shall not taste death till they have seen the

* Mark i., 15; Matt. iii., 2, etc.

kingdom of God come with power." Such is the assurance of Jesus as preserved in the oldest gospel.* "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon *this generation*." . . . "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." These are the words of Jesus as reported by Matthew.† This is the concurrent testimony of all the synoptical writers in many similar texts, derived incontestably from the primitive tradition out of which they drew their materials for the biographies of the Galilean prophet. No teaching in the New Testament is so plainly presented or so frequently reiterated as this. It is inconceivable that these assurances should have entered into the gospel narratives, unless Jesus really uttered them; for no writer of after times, desiring to present the claims of Jesus as an infallible teacher, could possibly have invented and referred to him these unfulfilled promises and prophetic utterances which by no possibility could ever be fulfilled, since the time plainly set for their accomplishment had already long since passed away. These assurances of Jesus are at once the proof of his reality as an historical personage and of his human fallibility and liability to error,—a fact of the most striking significance.‡

*Mark ix., 1. †Matt. xvi., 28; xxiv., 33, 34; xxiii., 36, etc. Compare Luke ix., 27; x., 11; xii., 40; xxi., 8, 32, etc.

‡The current orthodox claim of the fulfilment of these prophecies in the alleged phenomena of the "day of Pentecost" is wholly unsatisfactory. Apart from the want of evidence sufficient to establish the historical verity of these phenomena, they in no manner fulfil the condition/

The Kingdom of Heaven described in Parables.

Believing thus in the speedy advent of the heavenly kingdom, and perceiving the blindness and unpreparedness of his people, the overmastering desire of Jesus was to arouse them from their apathy, and induce them to make clean their lives in preparation for the new life which awaited the "sons of God,"—the children of the kingdom. To those who heard him willingly and accepted something of his message, he explained the nature of this new life in apt and beautiful allegories. In the parable of the Sower,* he thus taught that the preparation for the coming kingdom was an inward process, an ethical regeneration of the soul, and not merely an external obedience to the precepts of the law.† In the parable of the mustard seed,‡ he presented the hopeful assurance that the acceptance of the kingdom, "in spirit and in truth," by a few humble believers, would ultimately result in the world's regeneration. In the parable of the tares,§ he assured his disciples that the faithful doers of the word, though few in number, would be preferred to the many who carelessly neglected or wilfully rejected his warnings. In the allegories of the treasure hidden in

of the advent of the heavenly kingdom as set forth in the prophecies. The belief in the second advent of Christ as an event yet to occur, which has been common in all ages of the Christian Church, testifies to the admission of theologians that the New Testament prophecies are yet unfulfilled, but fails to take cognizance of that clear and vital element in the prophecies which limits the period of their accomplishment to the then living generation.

* Matt. xiii., 3–23; Mark iv., 3–15; Luke viii., 5–15.

† Compare Luke xvii., 20, 21.

‡ Matt. xiii., 31, 32; Mark iv., 30–32; Luke xiii., 18, 19.

§ Matt. xiii., 24–30, 36–43.

the field and of the "pearl of great price,"* he solemnly impressed his belief that all else was as nothing compared with the necessity of "seeking first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness." In the parable of the householder,† he held out the merciful assurance that even late repentance and return to righteous living would secure all the rewards of the kingdom, in which "the first should be last, and the last first." In the parable of the nobleman and the servants,‡ he illustrated the truth that the faithful laborer should be abundantly rewarded, while he who perceived the truth without laboring to spread it should be surely punished.

Jesus not a Zealot.—His Doctrine of Non-Resistance.

Jesus taught that the best preparation for the coming kingdom was to commence *now* to live as nearly as possible the ideal life of the sons of God. The time was short before the great change would take place: therefore, it was better to bear the ills of the present life with patience and without physical resistance rather than increase them by fomenting insurrection against the "powers that be," thus bringing down upon his followers the persecution and oppression of the government. This thought appears to lie at the foundation of his teaching in regard to the non-resistance of evil. "Resist not evil," he said. "If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if

* Matt. xiii., 44-46. † Matt. xx., 1-16. ‡ Luke xix., 11-27.

any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."* He forbade his disciples to take with them either gold or staves in their journeys.†

When his enemies sought to entrap him by asking whether it were lawful to render tribute unto Cæsar, he pointed to the emperor's image and superscription on the current coin of the empire, and said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but unto God the things that are God's."‡ In assuming this attitude toward the existing government, he at once thwarted the machinations of his more active and violent enemies, who sought to identify him with the party of the Kanaim, or Zealots,—who taught the duty of resisting taxation and abjuring the authority of the Romans,—and disappointed his more literal and patriotic followers, who believed that the Messiah, in his own person, would lead the faithful of Israel to overthrow and destroy the oppressor by force of arms, and thus re-establish the kingdom of the house of David.

Jesus' Communistic Teaching.—His Exaltation of Poverty.

As the kingdom of heaven was to constitute a sort of ideal community, where all would be equal before the heavenly Father, it appears also that Jesus and his disciples attempted to realize this social ideal in their intercourse with the world and

* Matt. v., 38–41; Luke vi., 27–35.
† So Matt. x., 10, and Luke ix., 3. Mark, on the contrary, contains an express command to take a staff with them (Mark vi., 8).
‡ Matt. xxii., 17–22; Mark xii., 13–17; Luke xx., 21–26.

with each other. It seems to have been a condition of discipleship that the true believer should relinquish his individual property, and hold all things in common with his brethren. One of the disciples was therefore appointed the treasurer, or custodian of their common fund.* Not only community of interest, but the blessedness of poverty appears to have been explicitly taught by the Galilean prophet. To the rich young man who had fulfilled the entire law in its spirit, loving God and dealing justly with his fellow-man from his youth up, he still further commanded that he should sell all that he possessed, and give the proceeds thereof to the poor, before he could be accounted a true disciple.†

Jesus was not alone among his people in his abhorrence of riches and exaltation of poverty. The long conflicts of the Jews with foreign enemies, the destruction and spoliation of their cities and their sacred temple, and the later period of lawless violence during the reign of Herod, seem to have given rise among them to two diverse ways of regarding poverty and riches. Those who dwelt in the larger towns and cities—the artisans, tradesmen, and inheritors of the priestly office and its emoluments—became very frugal and saving, careful to obtain the greatest possible advantage in bargain and trade. Of this class were the sellers of doves and changers of money in the court of the temple, whom Jesus in his indignation is said to have driven out with a whip of

*So John xiii., 29, following a generally current tradition.

†Matt. xix., 16-22; Mark x., 17-22; Luke xviii., 18-24.

small cords. Others, however, accepted their poverty as the righteous appointment of God, to rebel against which was impiety. Certain religious enthusiasts, particularly among the Galilean peasants who believed in the speedy advent of the heavenly kingdom, taught that it was wrong to accumulate property, and that all in excess of one's personal needs should be given to the poor. In the Jerusalem Talmud is preserved an account of Rabbi Jeshobeb, a contemporary of Jesus, who gave all his property to the poor. For so doing, he was reproved by the celebrated teacher, Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul sat.*

Less than a century later, this improvident mania had become so prevalent that a convention of rabbis, held at Usha, a town of upper Galilee, decreed that no one should bestow upon the poor more than one-fifth of all he possessed.† The Essenes and disciples of John the Baptist despised riches, commanded alms-giving and the equal distribution or communistic possession of property. These sects, as well as Jesus and his disciples, believed that the poor would enjoy special privileges in the heavenly kingdom. Ingenious attempts have been made by Christian commentators to soften or explain away the saying of Jesus: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."‡ They have even gone so far as to invent a Greek word, κάμιλος, defined as a heavy

* Jerusalem Talmud, tract *Peah*, 15, b.
† Babylonian Talmud, tract *Kethuboth*, 50, a; *Arachin*, 28, a. See also Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 169, ff.
‡ Mark x., 25; Matt. xix., 24; Luke xviii., 25.

cord or rope, thus suggesting difficulty, but not impossibility, in the salvation of the rich. The word, however, is spurious, being found nowhere outside the fertile imaginations of its originators. The "needle's eye" has also been explained as the designation of a low gate in the city walls of Jerusalem, through which a camel could only pass by kneeling and being stripped of its load, the proverb being thus robbed of its terrors, and made to convey only the trite suggestion of the impossibility of taking worldly riches into the life beyond the grave.

As a matter of fact, however, Jesus in this saying merely quoted or adapted a common Semitic proverb, which is found in a slightly altered form in the Talmud and the Koran as well as in the New Testament.* That his own interpretation was very literal appears not only from his admonition of the rich young man, but also in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man: the former of whom reposes after death in the bosom of Abraham, for no virtue, so far as we know, save his poverty; while the latter is suffering the torments of unquenchable fire, for no reason, so far as we know, save his riches.†

In the parable of the wedding feast, also, Jesus appears to have taught that only the poor could inherit the heavenly kingdom.‡ He pronounced blessings upon the poor and curses upon the rich.§ He commended his disciples to "lend, hoping for

*See Babylonian Talmud, tract *Bera Koth*, 55, b; *Baba metsia*, 30, b. Koran, Sura vii., 38.
† Luke xvi., 19–26. ‡ Matt. xxii., 1–11. Compare Luke xiv., 12–14, 16–24. § Luke vi., 20, 24, 25.

nothing in return." He forbade them to "lay up treasures upon the earth." He bade them "take no thought of the morrow," but live from day to day like the lilies of the field "which toil not." * He ordered them to make no provision for their journeys, but to solicit alms everywhere among those who would receive them, and to shake off the dust of their feet against that house which should refuse to entertain them.† He declared plainly the impossibility of at once serving God and Mammon.‡

The attempts to soften, discredit, or explain away these explicit teachings of Jesus, while their obvious relation to his belief in the speedy advent of the heavenly kingdom, constituting their only rational explanation, is overlooked or ignored, have been both ingenious and amusing. They stand, however, as certainly reflecting the thought of the Master as anything recorded in the New Testament. The earliest communities of Jewish Christians accepted these doctrines; and their successors derived from them the designation of "Ebionites," from the Hebrew *Ebionim*, "the poor,"—a designation which came to be regarded as synonymous with the terms "saint" and "friend of God."

The Pessimism of Jesus.—His Views of Marriage and the Family.

It would appear from all these considerations that Jesus' view of existing society was essentially

* Matt. vi., 19–21, 28–32; Luke xii., 27–34.
† Matt. x., 8–15; Mark vi., 8–11; Luke ix., 3–5.
‡ Matt. vi., 24.

pessimistic. The present and natural social order he regarded as not worth saving. Its inevitable burdens were to be endured while they must, in hope that patient endurance would speedily work out "a more exceeding weight of glory."

In reference to the domestic relations, Jesus exhibited the same tendencies of thought and feeling which he manifested toward society in general. He declared that in the heavenly kingdom there would be "neither marrying nor giving in marriage." * Endeavoring to conform himself to this ideal condition in the midst of the existing order, he formed no family relations himself. He even withdrew from the companionship of his father's family, and declared that his true disciples, following his example, must "forsake father and mother, brother and sister, husband and wife," and devote themselves wholly to preparation for the coming kingdom. His true relations, he declared, were his disciples and followers.†

Yet we are not to suppose that his thought and action herein were occasioned by any deficiency of the natural affections. His love for little children was not the manifestation of a disposition naturally cold or ascetic. Of such, he declared, was the kingdom of God. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child," he affirmed, "he shall not enter therein." ‡ He took little chil-

* Matt. xxii., 30; Mark xii., 25; Luke xx., 35. According to another text (Matt. xix., 10–12), he even countenanced self-mutilation as an alternative to marriage.

† Matt. viii., 21, 22; x., 34–38; xix., 29; xii., 46–50; Mark x., 29, 30; iii., 31–35; Luke ix., 59–62; xiv., 26; xviii., 29, 30; viii., 19–26.

‡ Mark x., 15; Luke xviii., 17.

dren in his arms and blessed them, rebuking his disciples when they would prevent their mothers from bringing them into his presence.* "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones," was his command to his followers. He appears to have regarded children as representatives of that purity and simplicity of character and that sincerity of faith and trust which he deemed essential to the members of the ideal community of the heavenly kingdom.

The relations of Jesus with his disciples, and with those families who received and entertained him, appear to have been always friendly and social. In this respect, certainly, he was no ascetic. He dined with Pharisees and Publicans alike,† and was even accused by his enemies of being "gluttonous and a wine-bibber." Herein, he resembled neither the Essenes nor the disciples of the Baptist, who, like the Nazarites of old, were total abstainers, and lived on the most spare and frugal diet.

His views of the sacredness of the marriage relation, regarded as a necessary accompaniment of the existing social order, were of the most exigent character. He forbade divorce save for the single cause of adultery;‡ but he also defined adultery as the inward desire of the heart, which, if admitted literally as a sufficient cause for divorce, would perhaps open the doors as widely as is desired by any of our modern social reformers.§

* Matt. xix., 13-15; Mark x., 13, 14, 16; Luke xviii., 15, [illegible]
† Matt. ix., 10-17; xi., 18, 19; Luke vii., 33, 34, 36.
‡ Matt. xix., 3-9.
§ Compare Mark x., 2-12. In this older and perhaps more

Doubtless, his doctrine of divorce, also, can only be rightly estimated as it is related to his belief in the speedy coming of the heavenly kingdom.

His Views of Education and Labor.

Jesus nowhere commends education or the systematic cultivation of the mind. Literary or scientific attainments formed no part of his own personal equipment, nor did he conceive of them as necessary or valuable to others. They were not an essential part of the preparation for the kingdom of the future, wherein all useful knowledges would arise in the mind spontaneously by a divine intuition.

Opposing the acquisition of property, and adjuring his disciples to live as the lilies which toil not, he naturally refrained from any explicit recognition of the necessity, importance, and honorableness of labor. Incidentally, indeed, he declared that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," *—a principle which, carried to its logical conclusion, would conflict radically with every system of servile labor. Yet he nowhere expressly recognizes, either in approval or condemnation, the existing institution of chattel slavery,—an institution which, in the subsequent evolution of society, became a constantly aggravated social evil. Had he given

reliable version, the prohibition of divorce is absolute, not even adultery or fornication being recognized as a legitimate cause for divorcement. This would of course deprive the above suggestion of all force or pertinency.

*Luke x., 7. The connection, however, implies only the enunciation of the right of the disciples to food and lodging—the bare necessities of life—while they were prosecuting their missionary labors.

it a thought, doubtless, like the apostle who returned the fugitive Onesimus, he would have deemed it better to endure the evil for a time without protest rather than to interfere directly with a social order which was so soon to pass away.

The Ethical Teaching of Jesus.

The ethical teaching of Jesus finds its highest illustration in the Golden Rule and the collection of aphorisms, beatitudes, and allegorical sayings known as the Sermon on the Mount.* Perfection in practical righteousness is herein held up as the end and object of all human endeavors. Happiness and misery, here and hereafter, are declared to depend upon the character and actions of the individual.† By these he will be judged and known, as the tree is known by its fruit.‡ The teachers of religion are to be tested, not by their professions, but by their practical works; and the people are warned against "false prophets who come in sheep's clothing, while inwardly they are as ravening wolves."

Everywhere, the inward motive and purpose of the heart is regarded as the supreme test of character rather than outward observance or appearance. It is not the act alone, but the sinful thought which constitutes adultery.§ Not he alone who kills, but he who is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.‖ Gifts placed upon the altar while anger is in the heart are of no avail. "First be reconciled to thy

* Matt. v.–vii. † Matt. vii., 16, 21, etc. ‡ Matt. vii., 15–20.
§ Matt. v., 28. ‖ Matt. v., 22.

brother, then come and offer thy gift."* The formality of an oath adds nothing to the simple majesty of the truth. "Let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."† Alms given in the sight of men possess no saving virtue. "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."‡ A like secrecy, as we have seen, was commanded in prayer, as it was also in fasting.§

The honest scorn of pretence and hypocrisy which characterizes the teaching of Jesus, his virile denunciation of evil in high places,—of the scribes and Pharisees, who sit on the high seats in the synagogues and devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers,‖—is little like the conventional meek and lowly Saviour of the current emasculated Orthodoxy of the present day, but resembles rather the lofty courage and fearless preaching of the ancient prophets, or the plain-speaking of the American Abolitionists, and justifies the fine conception of Thomas Hughes of the "manliness" of Jesus.

Yet on his tenderer side, as illustrated in the beatitudes and many of the parables, there is a

* Matt. v., 23, 24. † Matt. v., 33-37. ‡ Matt. vi., 1-4.
§ Matt. vi., 5, 6, 16-18. ‖ Matt. xxiii.; Luke xi., 37-54.

felicity of presentation, a gentle persuasiveness and "sweet reasonableness," which must have been most winning and attractive. It contrasts strongly with the dry, metaphysical reasoning of the philosophers, appealing only to a few cultivated intellects, or with the sublimated mysticism of the Brahmanical schools; and no less strongly with the hair-splitting logic and dogmatic appeal to traditional technicalities of the contemporary rabbis. Jesus was no philosopher; his simple idealism was free from the mysticism of the schools; he propounded no logical or deeply reasoned system of belief. He accepted the crude cosmogonical and cosmological notions of his time and nation without question. He taught the simple, strong, natural morality of an exceptionally fine ethical nature, fed by the nourishing stimulus of the Hebrew prophets. He did not stop to argue the question with his hearers: his vital words were spoken with the straightforward earnestness of one who stood upon the firm foundation of assured inner conviction. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

His Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins.

Upon one point only, besides his belief in future punishment, he appears to have been in concurrence with the dogmatic statements of modern Orthodoxy: he accepted, apparently, the current Jewish doctrine of the divine forgiveness and remission of sins,* — the natural and humane ac-

* See Ex. xxxii., 32; Ps. lxxviii., 38; xcix., 8; ciii., 3; Jer. xxxi., 34; Isa. xxxiii., 34; Dan. ix., 9, etc.

companiment of an arbitrary system of morality, based upon alleged revealed commandments of the Deity. To this he added the belief that this power of forgiving sins and cancelling the natural results thereof was committed by the Father to the Messiah, or "Son of Man," as his duly appointed representative or servant.* This doctrine, however, in his mind, did not descend to the grossness of the modern theory of a vicarious atonement. The forgiveness of sins was conditioned, not upon the acceptance of any dogmatic belief or the substitution of an innocent victim for the guilty, but solely upon repentance,— an inner moral change in the direction of righteous living, attested and assured by the free and full forgiveness of their enemies on the part of the sinners.†

Modern Criticisms upon the Ethical System of Jesus.

The ethical teachings of Jesus have been criticised from two quite different stand-points, which may be distinguished as the practical and the ideal. On the one hand, it is affirmed that his moral instructions are unpractical and impossible to apply to the affairs of our every-day life, because they are too exclusively altruistic. Modern society, it is claimed, could not exist, if we were to leave evil unresisted, if we were to turn the other cheek to the smiter after having been once unjustly stricken, if we were to give our cloak unasked to

*Matt. ix., 1–6, etc.; Mark iii., 29.

†Matt. vi., 12, 14, 15; Luke vi., 37; xvii., 3, 4.

the beggar who had demanded and received our coat or to the thief who had stolen it.

It appears quite evident, however, from our previous consideration of these questions that this extreme altruism was not intended for application during a long continuance of the natural social order. It is due almost wholly to the erroneous belief of Jesus that the present order of society was to endure but for a day; that a new, divine, and eternal order was soon to be established in its place. Had he looked forward to what we may now look back upon,—to many centuries of continuance under the old social order, to a natural evolution in human affairs instead of the supernatural revolution which he anticipated,—his teaching might, and doubtless would, have been greatly modified in some of these particulars.

Nevertheless, we have reason to be profoundly grateful for the vision of a perfect social order which is suggested by these ideal conceptions of the Prophet of Nazareth. It is by such visions as these that the world is lifted up and led onward to higher planes of thought and life. Like a rift in the clouds through which the sunlight streams, they gladden the hearts of men with the promise of diviner possibilities in the life that now is. In our way, we also may look forward to a higher order of human society to be established upon the earth. Each and all of us may in some manner so live as to hasten the period of its fulfilment. We, too, may pray with the disciples of the Nazarene that the kingdom of God may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Prof. Francis W. Newman and other able writers have criticised the ethical appeals of Jesus from quite another stand-point,—because they are not sufficiently altruistic in their foundation. It is affirmed by this class of critics that they are almost universally based upon self-interest instead of a desire to benefit society as a whole or to do right because it is right. Even the Golden Rule, it is alleged, would measure the love for the neighbor by the love for self. The beatitudes are each accompanied by some promise of selfish reward,—the offered attainment of some future happiness. The entire moral system of Jesus rests upon the accompanying assurance of eternal happiness in the heavenly kingdom for the workers of righteousness, and the co-ordinate threat of eternal misery for those who in this life fail to accept the conditions of salvation.

The most recent attempts to establish morality upon an assured scientific basis, however, recognize the necessity of giving due weight to the egoistic as well as the altruistic side of human action. An extreme and unqualified altruism would defeat the rational end of all moral action by speedily destroying the life or health of the agent. Action without regard to ends, ultimate or immediate, is everywhere properly regarded as irrational; and action which does not have explicitly in view the ultimate happiness of all, including the actor, can only be regarded as moral when, by previous analysis and comparison, we have been enabled to subsume all moral actions under a universal law which has been proved to result in

the security of universal happiness, and we are therefore impelled to obey the law without regard to its special or ultimate consequences.*

To no such profound philosophical view of morals, however, had the prophet of Nazareth attained. His ethical appeals were direct, simple, personal, devoted to the production of immediate results. Viewed broadly, except as they were affected by the erroneous expectation of the speedy coming of the heavenly kingdom, they do not suffer or lack in impressiveness, as tested by the rigid rules of an abstract moral philosophy. The ethical element was everywhere dominant in the religion of Jesus. His "heavenly Father" was a moral ideal personified,—a conception not inferior, but superior to that of the Hebrew prophets and law-givers. God to him was still, and ever more supremely, the "Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." The test of morality was at once and inseparably theocratic and utilitarian: the two ends were in no wise differentiated in his thought. To do right was alike conceived as perfect obedience to the divine will and as the means of securing happiness among men.

The Religion of Jesus as related to Judaism.

What, finally, was the relation of the religion of Jesus to Judaism and its system of morals as enunciated in the Thorah? This question can

*See Spencer's *Data of Ethics*, Savage's *Morals of Evolution*, Prof. Everett's essay on "The New Morality," etc. See also John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*. Mr. Mill even lays down the principle that the greatest happiness cannot be attained when it is consciously made an end and object of pursuit.

hardly be answered more satisfactorily than in the language of one of the most lucid and rational critics of the gospel literature, Ferdinand Christian Baur.* "Jesus," he says, "declared at the outset that he was not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, and might thus appear to have taken up an entirely affirmative position toward the Old Testament. It might be said that the difference between the teaching of Jesus and the law, or the Old Testament, was not one of quality, but of quantity. On this view, no new principle is advanced in his teaching: all that is done is to widen the application of the moral precepts which the law contained, and assert their authority over the whole extent of the moral sphere to which they are capable of referring. That is given back to the law which should never have been taken away from it. The law is declared to be capable of expansion in its meaning and its range of application, and this is said to be done.

"This interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount appeals to the fact that, in the further discussion of the subject, individual injunctions of the law are taken up, and each of them brought back to the original meaning of the law or interpreted in a sense which satisfies the moral consciousness. But, though there is no enunciation of a general principle which is to apply to all cases alike, yet, when we consider what is said to be the true fulfilling of the law in each separate instance, and

* *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, by Dr. Ferdinand Christian Baur, late Professor of Theology in the University of Tübingen.

see how in each instance what is done is to contrast the outward with the inward, to disregard the mere act as such, and lay stress on the disposition as that which alone confers any moral value on a man's acts, we cannot but recognize in this a new principle, and one which differs essentially from Mosaism. What the law contained, it is true, but only implicitly, is now said to be of most importance, and enunciated as the principle of morality. The expansion of the law quantitatively amounts to a qualitative difference. The inner is opposed to the outer, the disposition to the act, the spirit to the letter. This is the essential root principle of [the religion of Jesus];* and, in insisting that the absolute moral value of a man depends simply and solely on his disposition, the [religion of Jesus] was essentially original."

Historical Verity of the Man Jesus.

And now, as we pass on to a consideration of the later phases of the development of the Christian faith and doctrine, let us bear onward with us this sublime picture,—not indeed of a God or a supernatural being, but of a man,—a man loving in all ways to identify himself with his fellow-men, even the poorest and lowliest among them. More frequently than by any other designation, he refers to himself as "the Son of Man," a common desig-

* We substitute this phrase for "Christianity," in order to obviate the confusion which might arise from the use of a term which ordinarily implies certain doctrinal beliefs not found in the teaching of Jesus. As a matter of fact, this term was not applied to the new religion during the lifetime of its founder.

nation of the prophets, and at the time of Jesus probably not regarded as a Messianic title. Urged by an irresistible affection for his fellow-men, he gave the best labors of his life for their moral inspiration,—for their salvation from sin and preparation for the life of ideal perfection in the heavenly kingdom. Viewing his character in this purely natural and human aspect, we need not and will not consent to the uncritical judgment of those destructive writers who would deny to the gospel stories all historical validity or regard Jesus as the servile imitator of the founder of another and widely different religion. After separating from them the legendary and mythical accretions of an unscientific and credulous age, does there not yet remain to us the "saving remnant" of the New Testament narratives? Looking upon this picture, with all its lights and shadows of a noble yet fallible humanity, may we not say of the Prophet of Nazareth,—

> "He was a *man:*
> Take him for all in all,
> We shall not look upon his like again."

Would it then be just to conclude, with Christendom, that the career of Jesus presents phenomena wholly unique in the world's history? Such is, perhaps, the natural impulse of the human mind, after contemplating a life of heroic self-abnegation and devotion to the welfare of human kind. With a like thought, we have doubtless risen from the perusal of the noble tribute to the founder of another of the world's great religions in Edwin

Arnold's *Light of Asia*.* We are touched in a similar manner by the contemplation of the noblest characters of fiction,—the Jean Valjeans and the Romolas, ideal exemplars of this religion of lofty self-sacrifice. But sober second thought should lead us to question whether we ought not rather to bear in mind the human limitations of even the noblest of those who have lived and died for man, lest we fall into a species of idolatry and hero-worship inconsistent with the mandates of rational religion. At least let us not exalt one unduly by the disparagement of all others. The orthodox doctrine of "total depravity," the dark background against which the ideal picture of the supernatural Christ is limned, has no place in the healthy creed of rational religion.

Old Father Taylor, of Boston, the seamen's missionary, whose abundant humanity outweighed the depressing implications of his creed, when he was asked, "Do you think there ever was as good a man as Jesus?" instantly replied, "Yes, millions of them!" Have not you and I also known hearts as true and souls as full of manly courage?

Let us not deny Jesus his proper place in the world's history, nor place him so far above the level of our common manhood that he shall fail to

* We cannot protest too strongly against the systematic depreciation and condemnation of both Jesus and the Buddha in such works as Dr. Oswald's *Secret of the East*, of which more hereafter. Making all due allowances for theological errors, due largely, as we have seen, in the case of Jesus, to the failure to give due weight to a single mistaken belief, the noble personality and fine moral insight of those two great teachers are influences for good that the world will not willingly let die, or consent to see misrepresented or undervalued.

be to us always a rational example and inspiration to all noble things. Let him live in our hearts and minds a heroic, manly character, "not too saintly to be human." Is this indeed so difficult?

"Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
'Christ,' some one says, 'was human, as we are.
No judge eyes us from heaven our sin to scan.
We live no more when we have done our span!'
'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest, 'who can care?
From sin which heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes, our life without a plan!'
So answerest thou. But why not rather say,
'Hath man no second life? Pitch this one high!
Sits there no judge in heaven our sin to see?
More strictly then the inward judge obey.
Was Christ a man like us? Ah! let us try
If we then, too, can be such men as he!'"

VI.

MYTH AND MIRACLE IN THE GOSPEL STORIES.

THE earliest phase in the development of the Christian faith is that presented in the life and teachings of the Nazarene Prophet; that, in short, which we have attempted to deduce in the two preceding lectures from the record of the Triple Tradition of the Synoptical Gospels. The four Gospels also contain the record of a later phase in the growth of the new religion,—that embodied in the mythical and miraculous accretion which gathered at a very early day around the striking personality of the Man of Nazareth. Though the modern scientific spirit, which recognizes the enduring supremacy of law throughout the operations of nature, including the various mutations of human affairs, would perhaps justify us in relegating the miraculous elements in the gospel stories to the realm of the imaginary and unreal on *a priori* grounds, in view of the importance which these elements have ever maintained in the popular apprehension, we cannot refrain from a further careful consideration of their true historical meaning and the probable sources of their origin.

Demoniacal Possession and the Miraculous Cure of Disease.

We have already suggested that there may be a certain historical foundation for the alleged phenomena of demoniacal possession and exorcism, interpreted as the relief of nervous diseases, such as epilepsy or hysteria; and a like germ of actual fact may lie at the basis of other stories of miraculous cure found in the synoptical tradition. The influence of a powerful mind and will over impressionable natures is so frequently illustrated in the affairs of our every-day life that it requires no supernatural hypothesis for its explanation. A trusted physician or nurse often exercises a more potent influence over an invalid than that derived from medicine or the more obvious hygienic appliances. Belief in the curative efficacy of religious rites and priestly manipulations is common among all ignorant peoples, resting, doubtless, on similar, wholly natural, and non-miraculous facts, exaggerated by the imagination. We have only to suppose a like exaggeration, such as universally occurs in the oral transmission even of the reports of ordinary every-day occurrences, to account for the greater number of the alleged miraculous events recorded in the Synoptical Gospels.*

The Birth Stories of the Synoptical Gospels.

A critical examination of the records of other reported phenomena of an extraordinary character

* A recent interesting study of the alleged miracles of the present and past generations may be consulted in *The Dictionary of Miracles, Instructive, Realistic, and Dogmatic*, by L. Cobham Brewer, LL.D.

discloses so many discrepancies of statement that, apart from any general scientific hypothesis of the incredibility of miracles, and from the fact that the witnesses to the events are all anonymous and testify at second hand, we are justified in rejecting them by the recognized rules of testimony concerning ordinary statements of fact. We have already pointed out some of these discrepancies in the stories of the miraculous birth of Jesus. Apart from the fundamental disagreements in the narratives of Matthew and Luke, it is wholly incredible that Mark, the earliest writer, and John, the latest biographer of Jesus, should omit all reference to this alleged and most wonderful occurrence, if it had the least foundation in fact.

The natural genesis and growth of these legends among an uncritical and unscientific people like the early Christian converts are easily accounted for. Bishop Lightfoot says of the Jews of this period: "They were given over beyond measure to beliefs in all sorts of delusions, exorcisms, amulets, charms, and dreams. They were ready to believe everything strange, wild, and unnatural." Renan declares that "miracles were considered at that time the indispensable mark of the Divine and the sign of the prophetic calling."* Nor was this tendency an exclusive characteristic of the Jews. The masses of the people, and even many of the

* *Life of Jesus*, p. 230. There are some indications that Jesus was himself less credulous than the masses of his people, and that he did not regard miracles as necessary credentials to his office as a teacher of morals and religion. Thus, he rebuked the Pharisees for "seeking after a sign," declaring, according to the oldest Gospel, "There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark viii., 11, 12).

educated classes throughout the Roman Empire, were addicted to like beliefs. The birth stories of the Gospels, indeed, were evidently not of Jewish, but of Aryan origin. The earliest Jewish converts, as we have seen, and their successors, the Ebionites, rejected the story of the miraculous birth and the alleged virginity of the mother of Jesus,—a fact which was accounted to them as heresy by the already growing Orthodoxy of the earliest Christian centuries. The birth stories of the Gospels have much in common with the similar legends related of Krishna, Buddha, Apollo, Horos, and other Pagan deities. Through all of them run the easily discernible features of a primitive solar mythology, to which they are referable for their true explanation. The religion of Jesus at once came into contact and competition with the current faiths of Paganism, and the non-Jewish or Hellenized Christian apologists could by no means fail to ascribe to Jesus the possession of powers as wonderful and of an origin as divine as those claimed for the older demi-gods of the Aryan mythology.* How completely these stories were ignored by the earliest Jewish Christians, however, appears in the total absence of reference to them in the Gospels, outside the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, in which they are related.

The Similar Legend of Apollonius of Tyana.

Perhaps the growth of the Christian legend can be better understood and illustrated by reference

*The application of the title "Son of God" to Jesus, by a not unnatural misapprehension of the non-Jewish converts to Christianity, doubtless served to suggest and encourage the belief in the divine incarnation.

to the history of another remarkable man whose life was contemporary with the earliest Christian century, and whose story, upon its mythical and legendary side, bears striking and noteworthy resemblances to that of the founder of Christianity as preserved to us in the gospel traditions. Apollonius of Tyana was undoubtedly an historical personage. His leading biographer, Philostratus, whose work has descended to our time, was a Greek writer of repute who lived in the second and third centuries of the Christian era. Before Philostratus wrote, however, several biographies of Apollonius had already been composed, the first during his lifetime by one Damis, his friend and disciple, and others later by Maximus, of Ægæ, and Mæragenes. Ritter says of the work of Damis, which constituted the main reliance of Philostratus in the composition of his more elaborate biography, that it was "probably free from all intentional dishonesty."* The memoirs of Apollonius by Mæragenes are referred to by Origen in his reply to Celsus, and the leading facts in his career were well known before the time of Philostratus.

The General Reliability of the Life of Apollonius by Philostratus.

The biography by Philostratus was undertaken at the urgent request of Julia Domna, the wife of the Emperor Alexander Severus, in the early part of the third century of the Christian era, rather more than a hundred years after the death of

* *The History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. IV., p. 481. By Dr. Heinrich Ritter.

Apollonius. Baur* regards this work as a "tendency writing," the object of which was to harmonize the doctrines of the Pythagorean philosophy with the prevailing Platonism of the extant systems of Paganism. He conceives that Philostratus intentionally attributed to Apollonius wonderful works of a like character to those ascribed to Jesus by the Christians, and thus inferentially throws doubt upon the historical value of his biography. The general tenor of the work, however, is unquestionably personal and biographical rather than philosophical. Its defence of the Pythagorean philosophy is fragmentary, incomplete, and wholly incidental to its main object. Its leading facts and features are explicitly asserted to have been derived from the older memoranda of Damis, against which no such suspicion has ever obtained. They were accepted as in the main trustworthy by eminent controversialists of the time, and are confirmed in many particulars by internal evidence and by such allusions to Apollonius as we find in earlier and contemporary writers, and may be regarded as generally authentic, with the same allowance for exaggeration and interpolation in the mythical and miraculous portions of the narrative which we make in our estimation of the Christian Gospels. Ritter, whose treatment of this subject is candid and rational, does not agree with Baur that Philostratus had Christ in mind in composing his biography of Apollonius, and affirms that those

* *Christ and Apollonius.* Also *History of the Church in the First Three Christian Centuries*, by Ferdinand Christian Baur.

who take this view "appear to have looked but little into the general character of Philostratus as an author."* This conception of Baur may properly be discarded as resting upon no visible evidence, either internal or external to the work itself.

It is noteworthy that all these writings relating to Apollonius were composed in the Greek language, which was the native tongue of their subject. Their authorship is unquestioned; and the memoranda of Damis, the chief source of their information, were written during the lifetime of Apollonius. In all these respects, the biography by Philostratus, which is the only one possessed by us, presents testimonials to its validity superior to the Christian Gospels, the authorship of which is anonymous or pseudonymous, which were written in a language that Jesus did not write or speak, and in the composition of which we have no assured evidence that their writers possessed any memoranda prepared during the lifetime of their subject.

The Life and Labors of Apollonius.

Apollonius was born in Tyana, the capital city of Cappadocia in Asia Minor, shortly after the birth of Jesus.† He obtained his earlier education at Tarsus under one Euthydemus, a well-known

History of Ancient Philosophy, Vol. IV. So likewise the author of "Apollonius Tyænus" in the Encyclopædia Britannica.

† Mr. Daniel M. Tredwell, of Brooklyn, N.Y. (Mem. Am. Eth. Soc.), an enthusiastic student of the Apollonian literature, fixes the time of his birth in the precise year from which our era is erroneously dated. Of the exact date, however, there appears to be considerable uncertainty.

instructor, and afterward withdrew to Ægæ, a small village containing a temple dedicated to the god Æsculapius, where he spent some years in study and meditation upon the problems of religion, philosophy, and practical ethics. He there met Euxenus, a disciple of Pythagoras, by whom he was instructed in the philosophy of that eminent teacher. While very young, he renounced the follies and superficial pleasures of society, lived abstemiously upon a vegetarian diet, totally abjured the use of wine, wore no covering upon his feet, and only the simplest clothing. He refrained from cutting his hair, as did the Hebrew Nazarites and Hindu ascetics, and slept upon the hard ground.

After spending some five years in ascetic contemplation and study, he travelled for a long time through the Eastern countries,—Assyria, Persia, Babylonia, India, and Egypt,—studying their different religions and social customs. During his travels, and subsequently, he is said to have performed many marvellous works; though his biographer, in a tone strikingly similar to that of the modern Theosophists and advocates of "Esoteric Buddhism," everywhere disclaims the implication of miracle or violation of law apparently involved in the stories.* Apollonius is said to

*Pythagoras was also reputed to be a thaumaturgist or worker of miracles, and the healers of disease in general were accredited by the popular superstition as the possessors of remarkable and supernatural powers. These claims should not be regarded as the result of deliberate fraud or dishonesty, but rather as a recognized feature in the current methods of medical treatment, involving an element of mystery and concealment which the profession has not yet wholly outgrown.

have possessed the faculty of clairvoyance, or "second sight," by means of which he perceived and described the murder of the Emperor Domitian, when many miles distant from the place of its occurrence. He also foretold future events upon the occasion of his own journeyings, and in the more important affairs of Roman history. He is said to have appeared to his friends Damis and Demetorius bodily, though at a distance from his actual abiding place, while yet alive; and to have appeared to the Emperor Aurelian when he was about to destroy Tyana, and to a young unbeliever who ridiculed his doctrine some years after his death.

Alleged Instances of Demoniacal Exorcism and Cure attributed to Apollonius.

He possessed a remarkable power over the wills and actions of others; something akin, apparently, to the phenomena known to us as "animal magnetism." At one time, he is said to have quelled a turbulent and riotous crowd of people by simply waving his hands over their heads. At Lesbos, he is reported to have cured a young man possessed of devils; and many other instances of demoniacal exorcism are also attributed to him. A young man in Athens, through whom the demon uttered cries of fear and rage, could not face the look of Apollonius,—an incident reminding us of the healing of the demoniac of Gadara by Jesus. In another instance, a statue is said to have fallen, overturned by the evil spirit as he departed out of the afflicted person,—recalling the entrance of the

demons into the swine and their destruction in the sea, in the Christian legend.

In Asia Minor, Apollonius is said to have cured many people of the plague then raging; and, in Rome, it was reported and currently believed that he restored to life a girl of noble family who had been dead for some time.* During his life, he was regarded by many as the incarnation of the god Jupiter. He was mentioned with honor by his contemporary, Lucan,† the author of "Pharsalia"; and another contemporary, in contemplating his career, is said to have exclaimed, "We have a god among us!" His death occurred probably at Ephesus, when he was about a hundred years old. It was believed by many that he did not die, but that he was taken up bodily into heaven, as in the stories of the Hebrew patriarch Enoch and the prophet Elijah. A popular legend subsequently assigned the place of his translation to the temple of Diana Dictynna in Crete, upon the occurrence of which event it was said that the voices of young maidens were heard singing, "Quit the earth, O divine Apollonius, and ascend up into heaven."

The Deification and Worship of Apollonius.

After his death, he received divine honors at Tyana and throughout Asia Minor, and was held in universal respect by the Pagan world for many

*Philostratus, while reporting these marvellous occurrences on the authority of Damis, does not regard them as evidences of supernatural or miraculous power, but refers them to the profound knowledge of the powers of nature which Apollonius had acquired through investigation and study.

†Marcus Annæus Lucanus, a Roman poet, *circum* 29–65 A.D.

generations. Hierocles, the governor of Bithynia, a noted Pagan controversialist, wrote a work in opposition to Christianity, the main feature of which consisted in an ingenious parallel between Christ and Apollonius. His object, however, was not to claim divine honors for Apollonius, but to combat the similar claim made for Jesus by Christian apologists. His work* was rationalistic in its leading features; and he declared that the intelligent heathen did not regard Apollonius as a god, but only as a man beloved of the gods.† The philosopher Ennapius, in consideration of the remarkable character of Apollonius as described by Philostratus, proposed to entitle his biography Ἐπιδημία εἰς ἀνθρώπους θεοῦ, *The Advent of the God-Man*. Even Christian apologists, like Sidonius Apollinaris‡ and Cassiodorus,§ have nothing to say against Apollonius, but, on the contrary, speak loudly in his praise.‖

A temple was erected to his honor at Tyana, his native city; and his statue was placed therein among those of the gods. Another temple was erected to him subsequently by the Emperor Caracalla, and Alexander Severus enshrined him among his household deities. For four centuries, he received divine honors throughout Greece and Asia

*Λόγοι Φιλαλήθεις, *Words of the Love of Truth*, or *True Discourse*.

† Our information is derived from the essay of Eusebius, *Contra Hieroclem*.

‡ *Circum* 431–484 A.D., some time Bishop of Clermont in Auvergne, and author of historical epistles, poems, etc.

§ Lived 468–560 A.D., author of a Universal History to A.D. 519, and other works.

‖ See *Apollonius of Tyana*. By Albert Réville, Doctor of Theology, Rotterdam.

Minor, and his renown extended to remote countries.*

The Religion and Ethical Teaching of Apollonius.

The religion inculcated by Apollonius tacitly recognized the gods of the Roman pantheon, but tended strongly toward monotheism. He especially recommended, says Ritter, a pure worship of the Supreme God who is separate and alone, to whom should be offered the pure prayer of the spirit, which requires not even words for its expression. He forbade all animal sacrifices, and also taught that no sacrifices of any sort should be offered to the Supreme God, on the ground that whatever belongs to earth is impurity to God. Herein, doubtless, we see the influence of those Eastern philosophies of which Apollonius was a faithful student.

In his travels, not only in his native country, but in Egypt, Assyria, India, and Persia, he taught everywhere a higher morality than that inculcated by the current religions, and endeavored to reform the grosser abuses of the heathen modes of worship, thus spending his life in the effort to benefit and elevate mankind. Soon after his return from his long sojourn in the East, he applied for initiation into the sacred mysteries of Eleusis; but his

* The poet and controversialist Lucian, writing about 150 A.D., the friend of Celsus, whom Froude calls "the most gifted and purest-hearted thinker outside the Church, who was produced under the Roman Empire," alludes to Apollonius incidentally in his account of the religious charlatan Alexander of Abonoteichus, whom he supposes to have been instructed in magic by the disciples of Apollonius. Lucian condemned the supernaturalism of the followers of Apollonius as he did that of the Christians.

popular repute as a magician, or worker of miracles, caused his application to be rejected. Four years later, however, when his character and the beneficence of his labors were better known, he was received and initiated.* "Apollonius," says a writer in the Encyclopædia Britannica, "is not to be looked upon as a shallow and vulgar impostor, though, to influence men's minds, he had recourse to artifices and pretensions unworthy of a true philosopher. With some of the spirit of a moral and religious reformer, he appears to have attempted, though vainly, to animate an expiring Paganism with a new and purer life." †

Remarkable Coincidences of the Apollonian and Christian Traditions.

We have sketched the salient points in the career of Apollonius thus at length, in order both to rescue from unmerited oblivion the name and story of one who in his day was well counted among the benefactors of mankind, and also, by comparison with the Christian legend, to illustrate the growth of mythical and miraculous accretions around the record of a noble human life. The relegation of these elements to their proper region of unreality does not in the least justify us in questioning the historical verity of the personage about whom they have grown into being; nor do the striking coincidences of the Christian and the Apollonian legends detract at all, as some have claimed, from the probable truth of the story of

*"The Eleusinian Mysteries," by François Lenormant, *Contemporary Review*, May, *et seq.*, 1880.
†Article, "Apollonius Tyænus," Encyclopædia Britannica, ninth edition.

the man Jesus of the Triple Tradition of the Synoptical Gospels. The contemplation of these coincidences, however, and of the leading features in the Apollonian tradition, cannot fail to throw valuable light upon the genesis and development of the Christian *mythus*, and to convince us that the story of Jesus, on its supernatural side, is no single or unique phenomenon in the history of the world's religions.

The significant fact of the contemporaneous growth of these two legends, each centering about an undoubted historical personage, will go far to explain the similarity of the mythical and miraculous elements which enter into the popular versions of both. Each came into being in the midst of a society familiar with the leading features of the Greek and Roman mythologies, with which were also mingling the similar beliefs of Persia and India. The acquaintance of Apollonius and his disciples with the Eastern mythologies is noteworthy and suggestive. The likeness of the two narratives, however, appears in just this subsequent accretion of myth and miracle, and in nothing else. The personal histories of Jesus and Apollonius—the one an uncultivated Galilean peasant, dying an ignoble death upon the cross at the age of about thirty-three years, in an obscure corner of Asia; and the other an educated pagan, rounding out a full century in the light of the highest civilization then known to the world, and dying in favor, apparently, with God and man—are totally dissimilar. The one was a Pythagorean philosopher: the other taught no system of philosophy; and that

which commingled with his simple moral teaching in after times was not the doctrine of Pythagoras, but that of Plato. The supposition that the Christian story was borrowed from the Apollonian is, therefore, as unreasonable as the contrary hypothesis of Baur; and all comparisons between the two narratives made with the intent to throw doubt upon the identity of Jesus as an historical character, or to undervalue his work as a religious teacher, are futile and irrational.

Moreover, the conclusion in regard to the non-miraculous character of the marvellous works reported of Apollonius, through the frank admissions and explanations of Philostratus, is precisely similar to the conclusion to which we are compelled by the critical investigation of the gospel stories. In both instances, perhaps, there may be some foundation for the alleged phenomena of exorcism and cure in the potent influence of mind over mind. We discard at once, however, all idea of reality in connection with such relations as that of restoring life to the dead, except as it may have been based upon the relief of some such condition as trance, and assign to their proper mythological sources the origin of the fables about the miraculous birth and bodily translation of Apollonius. The appearance in both the Apollonian and the Christian legends of certain elements, apparently of Eastern or Hindu origin, and the well-authenticated account of the travels of Apollonius in India, together with the attempt of certain recent writers to attribute a Buddhistic origin to the entire gospel tradition, make it

imperative for us to examine further the grounds of this opinion.

The Alleged Buddhistic Origin of the Christian Tradition.

We have already demonstrated that the Man Jesus of the Triple Tradition of the synoptics was a Hebrew, and a Hebrew only; moving naturally in the Palestine of eighteen centuries ago, speaking the language and discussing the familiar topics of his time and people. His admitted pessimism was native to the soil and thought of Palestine, and neither in its expression nor in its vision of the future did it present any of the characteristic features of Buddhism. If the pessimism of Jesus differed from that of Job and the author of Ecclesiastes, it was rather in this: that it qualified its despair of the existing social order by the great hope and promise of a new and diviner order soon to be established on the earth, in the joys of which all the righteous would consciously participate. To this everywhere present and dominant doctrine of the Gospels, Buddhism presents no analogy.

In examining the ingenious argument of Dr. Felix Oswald in favor of the Buddhistic origin of the Christian tradition,* it is evident at a glance that his analogies, on their Christian side, are borrowed chiefly from the Fourth Gospel, and from the contradictory birth stories of the First and Third Gospels, which, as we have seen, are excluded from the material upon which we are

* *The Secret of the East.* By Dr. Felix Oswald. Compare especially the "Concordance of Buddhism and Christianity," pp. 128–139 in Appendix.

permitted to draw for a rational outline of the life and thought of Jesus.* Other alleged analogies bearing upon the mythical or historical sides of the narrative of the Synoptical Gospels, like the stories of the temptation, the transfiguration, and the choosing of the disciples,† bear so little resemblance in detail and present such marked points of dissimilarity that the candid critic can discover therein no evidence of derivation the one from the other. Of the alleged "Dogmatical Analogies," ‡ some tested by a true critical analysis are found neither in the Synoptical Gospels nor in the authentic teachings of Buddhism; § and others have been shown to grow so naturally out of the Judaism of Palestine that no hypothesis of foreign influence is required to account for their natural genesis and development.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that some notable analogies may be discovered between the Buddhist *mythus* and the birth stories of the First and Third Gospels, and the possibility that the mythical accretions which gathered about the historical personalities of Prince Siddârtha and Jesus had *a common origin* may also be admitted. That the origin of the Christian *mythus* can be traced directly to Buddhism, however, it would be difficult to prove. It bears the easily discernible

* Cf. paragraphs 1–14, 16, 19, 21, 24, 27, pp. 128–136, *Secret of the East*.

† *Secret of the East*, paragraphs 15, 17, 20, pp. 132, 133.

‡ *Secret of the East*, pp. 136, 137.

§ Where, for instance, can we discover the "belief in the necessity of redemption by a supernatural mediator," or in the efficacy of vicarious atonement, in the authentic teachings of Buddhism, in anything like the Christian sense?

impress of a solar mythology, the leading features of which were widely distributed throughout Asia and Europe.* Upon this question, probably, there is no better authority than Prof. Max Müller, who acknowledges the startling coincidences between Buddhism and Christianity and the prior origin of the former faith. In reference to alleged historical channels through which Buddhism has influenced Christianity, however, he declares: "I have been looking for such channels all my life, but hitherto I have found none. What I have found is that for some of the most startling coincidences there are historical antecedents on both sides; and, if we know these antecedents, the coincidences become far less startling." †

The Growth of Miraculous Legends illustrated in the Gospel Stories.

Investigating further the miraculous relations of the Gospels, we find that the Triple Tradition contains no record of the restoration of the dead

*This is likewise true of the mythical elements in the Apollonian tradition, the ultimate origin of which, like those in the gospel stories, may be traceable, perhaps, to India, but not directly to Buddhism.

†From a letter addressed to a conference on Buddhism held at Sion College, in June, 1882, to discuss the real or apparent coincidences between Buddha and Christ. Prof. Müller also declared such a discussion, in general terms, almost an impossibility, saying that "the name of Buddhism is applied to religious opinions, not only of the most varying, but of a decidedly opposite character, held by people in the highest and lowest stages of civilization, divided into endless sects, nay, founded on two distinct codes of canonical writings." See Max Müller's most recent work, *India: What it can teach us*, pp. 108, 109, note by Dr. Alexander Wilder (Funk & Wagnalls edition, "Standard Library"). The early date of the *Lalita Vistara*, defended by Dr. Oswald, is not accepted by such recent writers on Buddhism as Rhys-Davids and Oldenburg, than whom, I suppose, there are no more reliable authorities.

to life by Jesus, the only occurrence popularly interpreted to be a miracle of this character being the cure of the daughter of Jairus,* where Jesus explicitly declares "the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." The rational explanation of this event may doubtless be found in the well-known phenomenon of trance. In Luke, we have the exaggerated account of the raising of the widow's son;† while the Fourth Gospel, with great detail, relates the still more marvellous story of the restoration of Lazarus to life after he had been dead four days.‡ It is absolutely incredible that these occurrences, if having any foundation in fact, should be unknown to the writers of the earlier Gospels, or, if known, that they should not be reported.§ By the investigation of these similar legends, we are led to the consideration of the principle underlying the growth of marvellous relations.

It appears to be a universal rule, in the Bible as elsewhere, that miraculous legends are subject to a regular law of growth,—a rule which, if recognized and admitted, at once and completely destroys their alleged character as actual occurrences except as they are susceptible of an entirely natural explanation, and consequently their historical value as evidences of supernatural power. *Such stories become uniformly more numerous and*

* Mark v., 37–42; Matt. ix., 23–26; Luke viii., 51–55.
† Luke vii., 11–17. ‡ John xi., 1–46.
§ These miracles were not done in secret, according to the record, but were generally known. Of the raising of the widow's son, Luke declares, "This rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about" (Luke vii., 17); while, according to the author of the Fourth Gospel, "many of the Jews" were aware of the raising of Lazarus (John xi., 19, 45, 47–54).

more marvellous as time separates the historical events about which they cluster farther and farther from the period of their relation. This is true, even of eras when a belief in the possibility of miraculous occurrences is common. In the writings of the eighth century prophets,* who spoke of their own personal times and experiences, there is hardly a trace of the miraculous; while the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, written long after the events which they describe, contain many marvellous relations. The first of the apocryphal books of the Maccabees is a plain historical narrative almost entirely free from miracle; while the later books, five in all,† exhibit a steady and constant development of the miraculous as the time of their composition recedes from the period described.

The Epistles of Paul, the earliest writings of the New Testament, report none of the miracles of Jesus, though Paul himself was a believer in "signs and wonders."‡ Mark, the oldest gospel, contains fewer miracles than either of the other synoptics; Luke contains more marvellous relations than Matthew; while the Fourth Gospel, though its miracles are less numerous and more obviously selected to serve the special purpose of its writer, exhibits a vast exaggeration in the direction of thaumaturgical effect. The birth stories of the synoptics, absent wholly from Mark, the earliest gospel, found in their simplest form in Matthew, amplified in Luke by the account of the

* Amos, Hosea, Isaiah I., Zechariah II., Micah.
† Only two are included in the Old Testament Apocrypha as ordinarily published.
‡ I. Cor. xii., 9-10; xiv.; xv.

annunciation to the mother of John the Baptist and the story of his birth and relationship to Jesus, are still more exaggerated in the later apocryphal Gospels, where we find not only the basis of the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, but also many marvellous stories of the childhood of Jesus, illustrated by miracles introduced for a purely thaumaturgical effect, such as making mud birds and causing them to fly, and changing a child into a kid. The story of the calling of the earlier disciples in the Synoptical Gospels, related simply and naturally in Mark and Matthew, is expanded and embellished in Luke by the wonderful narrative of the miraculous draft of fishes.

Miraculous Legends of a Mythological or Allegorical Character.

The gospel stories of walking on the water and stilling the tempest, if not legends of a purely mythological character, may have grown out of certain parables or allegorical sayings of Jesus, intended to illustrate the truth that man can overcome the extremest obstacles and difficulties as long as he is sustained by the courage which constant faith bestows, but, with the commencement of fear or distrust, his failure becomes certain. Goethe assigns to these stories a place of high honor among legends which excel in beauty and depth of meaning.* The story of the miraculous feeding of the multitude may also be of a parabolic or allegorical character, growing out of

*See *Bible for Learners*, Vol. III By Dr. I. Hookyaas.

such sayings as the beatitude, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." If so, these legends are to be interpreted, not as the relation of actual and material occurrences, but as parables, illustrating an obvious interior and spiritual truth. These stories, however, bear some of the characteristic signs of the solar *mythus*,—signs which become still more evident in the reported miracles of the Fourth Gospel.

Remarkable Character of the Fourth Gospel Miracles.

A further investigation of this remarkable Christian epic in this connection cannot fail to confirm our previous conclusion in regard to its artificial and unhistorical character. In the mythologies connected with other religions, careful students have recognized a notable recurrence of similar circumstances or events in the stories of the various incarnations of the solar deity. Thus, in the Greek and Roman systems, we have reported the twelve labors of Herakles. In the great Babylonian epic, we have related on twelve distinct tablets as many wonderful adventures of the hero Izdubar, whose father was Shamas, the sun.* Among the early Hebrew legends, we have similarly reported the twelve mighty deeds of Samson, whose name also signifies the sun, or one born of the sun.† These stories were all originally in-

* *The Chaldean Account of Genesis.* By George Smith, A.M.

† See *Hebrew Poetry.* By Michael Heilprin.

tended to symbolize the passage of the sun through the twelve astronomical signs of the zodiac; though in after times, and to the popular apprehension, their natural origin was forgotten, and they came to be regarded as narrations of historical facts.

It is a striking fact, and one which has apparently escaped the observation of scholars, that we have certain similar features presented to us in the great Christian epic of the Incarnate Logos,—the Fourth Gospel. The number of the miracles in the Fourth Gospel is commonly stated to be only seven; but, if we bear in mind that we have here not merely the biography of the man Jesus during the short period of his life and labors in Palestine, but the story of the eternally existing *Logos*, the number of his wonderful works, as herein related, becomes precisely twelve, no more and no less. These are: 1. The creation of the world. "The world was made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."* 2. The Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."† 3. The turning of water into wine.‡ 4. The manifestation of clairvoyance, or "second sight," in his interview with the woman of Samaria.§ 5. The cure of the nobleman's son, who was sick of a fever.‖ 6. The cure of the impotent man.¶ 7. The miracle of the loaves and fishes.** 8. Jesus walks upon the water at the Sea of Galilee.†† 9. He cures a blind man at the pool of

* John i., 3. † John i., 14. ‡ John ii., 3-11.
§ John iv., 7-19. ‖ John iv., 46-54. ¶ John v., 2-9.
** John vi., 5-14. †† John vi., 16-21.

Siloam.* 10. He raises Lazarus from the dead.† 11. Jesus himself rises from the tomb after the crucifixion.‡ 12. He appears to the disciples after the resurrection.§

The Fourth Gospel Miracles interpreted on the Solar Hypothesis.

It is likewise evident that all of these alleged miracles—no two of which are precisely similar in character—have an obvious meaning as interpreted by the solar theory. The creation legend of the Old Testament has long been recognized by scholars as a myth of the dawn, when the rising sun, moving on the face of the waters, reveals first the earth, then the planets, then the various animals, and, last of all, man, as he comes forth to pursue his daily labors.‖ So, too, in the Logos epic, the creation of the world may obviously be regarded as the work of the solar deity, not yet incarnate. The incarnation itself is a miracle so universally attributed to the sun-god that it is necessary only to recall the fact to establish the *a priori* probability of its solar character. The transformation of water into wine is but a poetical figure for the ever-recurring wonder which the sun is working in nature. The phenomenon of clairvoyance, of a vision penetrating into all secrets and to the uttermost parts of the earth, is attributed by the mythologies of many nations to the "all-seeing eye" of the sun.¶

* John ix., 1-7. † John xi., 1-46.
‡ John xx., 11-18. § John xx., 14—xxi., 25.
‖ See *Bible for Learners*, Vol. I.
¶ Like phenomena, as we have seen, are attributed to Apollonius of Tyana.

The miracles of cure are simply poetical statements of the universally recognized fact of the healthful and life-giving energies of the solar rays. Especially is this interpretation significant in the alleged restoration of sight to the blind. It is a beautiful symbol of the sun's beneficent influence accompanying the dawn of every day and the dissipation of the darkness of night. The sun also gives power to the impotent; and, as he marks the passing of the years, he allays the hot fever of youth. So, too, the sun brings food to all the children of man. He multiplies abundantly the "loaves and fishes" for the multitudes of to-day as well as eighteen hundred years ago, by his wonderful fertilizing power.

At the dawn of every new day, the sun-god comes to his wondering worshippers, walking over the sea,—his touch so miraculously light that no tiniest wavelet bows its crest beneath his tread. The resurrection myth, too, was a characteristic feature of the solar cultus in Babylonia, in Egypt, in the sacred mysteries of Mithras and Eleusis as well as in the Christian gospel. And, last of all, on every morning appears to his disciples, after the resurrection,

> "The dead earth's divine Redeemer,
> Giver of the Light and Law."

When we further recall such expressions as, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not"; "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; "Every one that doeth evil

hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved"; "For I am come down from heaven . . . to do the will of him that sent me"; "I am the light of the world"; "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you"; "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light,"—our conviction of the origin of these figures and illustrative miracles in the solar mythology is strongly confirmed.

We would greatly err, however, if we should therefore relegate the entire gospel to this physical and mythological region for its explanation, as certain riders of the solar hobby have attempted to do.* This was but the body, the garment for an inner soul of philosophical and dogmatic instruction, drawn mainly from the Neo-Platonism of Philo and the Alexandrian schools. About the person and the vague traditional history of the man Jesus, the author drew this garment, woven of the solar rays; and in place of the simple doctrine of love to God and love to man, which the Prophet of Nazareth taught as a preparation for the heavenly kingdom, he substituted his own mystical and dogmatic theology, which for ages has

*The author has no sympathy with that extreme view which would reduce nearly all of the Old and New Testaments to a series of mythological relations. The historical character and general accuracy of these narratives have been abundantly proven. There is no doubt, however, a strong intermingling of mythological elements in the history of the pre-Mosaic period, much of it of Babylonian or Chaldean origin. The truth evidently lies between the two extremes, and a nice discrimination is often required to distinguish myth from history.

weighed like an incubus upon the life and thought of Christendom.

Spiritual Symbolism: "The Oriental Christ."

Though it is thus evident that many of the miraculous events in the gospel narratives have their parallel in similar relations concerning the religious teachers or alleged incarnate deities of other faiths, though we find such notions as the miraculous conception, the virgin mother, the birth in a cave connected with the stories of many other alleged incarnations of God besides Jesus of Nazareth, and discover also that these and other similar ideas have their origin and explanation in a primitive solar mythology, it should likewise be remembered that in Christianity, as well as in the older religions which drew their symbols from the phenomena of nature, an inner spiritual interpretation pervaded the material symbolism; and the physical origin of the figures was doubtless often forgotten or regarded as relatively unimportant.

We have already noted the fact that a large proportion of the comparisons that have been drawn between the Buddhist and the Christian traditions appears on their Christian side in the extraneous mythological elements of the Synoptical Gospels, of non-Jewish origin, and in the unhistorical narrative of the Fourth Gospel. It is noticeably, also, this ideal Christ of the Christian mythology and the Fourth Gospel—the incarnate Logos—rather than the historical Jesus of the Triple Tradition which constitutes the "Oriental

Christ" of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar and the Brahmo Somaj of India. The natural genius of the Jew differs as widely from that of the Hindu as does the genius of the Orient from that of the Occident. The one is distinctively and characteristically Semitic: the other is distinctively and characteristically Aryan. The religion of Jesus was simple, practical, free from mysticism. That of India, whether illustrated in the ancient Brahmanical literature or in the theistic rhapsodies of the followers of Chunder Sen, is quite the opposite. The "Oriental Christ" of the eloquent Hindu is an Aryan and not a Semite. He possesses few of the recognizable traits of the historical Jesus.*

The confusion of these two entirely distinct ideals of character,—of the Jesus of history with the legendary Christ,—in the popular and uncritical perception, is unfortunate and misleading. By no arbitrary process, but by following the guidance of the Triple Tradition of the synoptical Gospels,

*At the very time when these lectures were in process of composition and delivery, the history of the Brahmo Somaj in India was presenting a most striking and significant illustration of the rapidity with which assumptions of a superhuman or divine character grow up about a noble human personality. Hardly has Keshub Chunder Sen been placed upon his funeral pyre, when his disciples commence to speak of him almost in the precise terms in which the Fourth Gospel refers to Jesus. In a resolution lately passed by the Apostolic Council of the "New Dispensation" occurs the following: "We believe our minister was living in the bosom of God as the minister of the New Dispensation before the beginning of creation. And our relationship with him is not for time, but for eternity. None can accept this dispensation except through him.... Hence, when preaching the New Dispensation, it is needful to proclaim his eternal relationship with the same." No better illustration could possibly be afforded of the manner in which the Man Jesus became the ideal Christ, or of the marvellously short time required, in the right intellectual soil, for this remarkable transformation.

we have succeeded in eliminating the extraneous accretions from the essential teaching and personal characteristics of the Man of Nazareth, thus discovering him as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as a man of men. While it is quite possible that some of the mythical elements which enter into the Christian tradition in its second period of development, and perhaps also some of the doctrinal and dogmatic teachings of the Fourth Gospel, may have been derived from the mythologies and philosophies of India, we may safely conclude that no such connection can be established with the life or doctrine of the historical Jesus. The confusion of these two distinct ideals—the one historical and real, the other mythical and unreal—in the popular conception of the founder of Christianity is seen to have resulted naturally from the contact of the new religion with its local and temporal environment. The circumstance is by no means exceptional or remarkable. Similar accretions of the marvellous have gathered around the persons of the leaders and demi-gods of all the ancient religions. To have discovered a religion without these legendary accompaniments, that, indeed, would have been a notable exception; but no such exception can be urged in support of the exclusive claims of Christianity. In our subsequent discussion, it will appear still more clearly, I think, that, judged in the court of reason and according to the accessible evidence of history, regarded in the light of the new science of comparative religion, Christianity is no exceptional faith. Its claims of supernatural origin and

attestation by miracle are unfounded and irrational. Like all the other religions of the world, it is a human institution, a natural growth out of pre-existing conditions, the product of our Father, MAN.

VII.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF PAUL.

NEXT to the personality of Jesus, that of Paul is the most interesting and noteworthy in the history of primitive Christianity. Auguste Comte and other students of this history have even assumed for Paul the credit of being the real founder of the Christian religion, regarding the gospel story as a mythical and legendary relation of no historical value. Our previous discussion, however, has prepared us to reject this hasty conclusion, and to assign to Jesus his proper historical position. "In Jesus himself," says Prof. Allen, . . . "there were — besides the indefinable something which resides in personality—at least two elements, one of vast personal force and the other of great historical significance: his intense conception of purely moral truth and of religion as a life, and his equally intense conviction of his calling as the Messiah of the Jews. These were the necessary antecedents of the revolution. . . . But, as soon as the movement widens out beyond the narrow range of a merely personal and local influence, then the life and work of Paul come to be just as essential to any real understanding of it." *

* Saint Paul, in *Christian History*, vol. i. By Prof. Joseph Henry Allen.

Our only reliable record of the teaching of Paul is found in the genuine Pauline Epistles of the New Testament, which, as we have seen, are the earliest extant Christian writings. The Acts of the Apostles, which in some particulars confirms the testimony of the Epistles, in others distorts or contradicts it, and is therefore of very little historical value in our study of Paul, except as it gives us some information, probably from reliable sources, of his early life and history. The date of its composition is much later than the dates of the Epistles; and its general character is that of a "tendency writing," the object of which is not so much the dissemination of historical truth as the reconciliation of two conflicting parties, into which, as we shall see hereafter, the early Christian communities came to be divided.

Of the fourteen Epistles attributed to Paul by the current orthodox tradition, all except four—Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians—have had their authenticity questioned by able critics. There are unquestionably differences in thought traceable in the earlier and later Epistles; and, in the case of Hebrews, these differences are so marked, and are accompanied by such a notable divergence in style and phraseology, that we are justified in concluding that Paul could not have been its author. With this exception, however, and with the exception also of the Epistles to Timothy * and Titus, and perhaps also Ephesians,

*The Epistle to Timothy is dated "from Laodicea, which is the chiefest city of Phrygia Pacatiana"; but Phrygia was not separated into three divisions, of which Phrygia Pacatiana was one, until the fourth century. See Horne's *Introduction*, ii., 174. The Epistle, however, was of earlier date, though not written by Paul.

the internal evidence would appear stronger in favor of their authenticity than in opposition thereto. The differences of thought observable are no greater than might be expected in the mental progress of a man of the wide experience and great mental activity of Paul.*

The Legend of the Resurrection.

Paul is the earliest witness to the prevalence of the legend of the resurrection of Jesus among his disciples and followers.† Since Paul bases his Christian belief and teaching upon this phenomenon as an established fact,‡ and since Christendom has accepted it as the foundation stone of its spiritual edifice, it becomes necessary, in our further consideration of the evolution of the early Christian faith, to investigate briefly the evidences of this remarkable occurrence, as presented in the writings of the New Testament. The Triple Tradition says nothing of any miraculous appearance of Jesus after death, nor of his ascension to heaven, the concluding verses of Mark being admittedly a spurious addition to or alteration of the original manuscript. In the account of the oldest Gospel,§ the two Marys and Salome, going to the sepulchre at sunrise on the first day of the week, find the heavy stone rolled away from its

*The leading Epistles of Paul were probably written in about the following order: 1, II Thess., about A.D. 52; 2, I. Thess., A D. 53; 3, I. Cor., A.D. 57; 4, II. Cor., A.D. 57; 5, Gal., A.D 58; 6, Romans, A.D. 58; 7, Philo., A.D. 62; 8, Col., A D. 62; 9, Phil., A.D. 63. For a discussion of their authenticity, see Baur, Chadwick (*Bible of To-day*), *Supernatural Religion*, Renan's *Saint Paul*, etc

† I. Cor. xv, 3-8; I. Thess. i, 10, etc.

‡ Ibid., xv., 17. § Mark xvi., 1-8.

entrance, and discover "a young man, . . . clothed in a long white garment," sitting within the sepulchre. He informs them that Jesus is risen, and bids them tell Peter and the other disciples that the Master has gone before them into Galilee, where they shall see him as he had promised.

In Matthew,* the "young man in a long white garment" has become "an angel of the Lord," whose "countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The two Marys go to the sepulchre, and are addressed by the angel; but no mention is made of Salome. Jesus now appears, first to the women, near the sepulchre, and afterward to the eleven disciples in Galilee. The record of his reappearance is very brief; and it is significantly added, "And when they saw him, they worshipped him; *but some doubted.*" This Gospel contains no record of the ascension of Jesus.†

In Luke,‡ we find the women, including one Joanna, not before mentioned, going to the sepulchre as before, but not alone; for "certain others were with them." Instead of a single "young man" or "angel" as in the earlier gospels, we have now "two men in shining garments," who converse, apparently in concert, with the women. Then follows a long and circumstantial account of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples,—not in Galilee, as expressly declared in the earlier Gospels,

*Matt. xxviii.

†On the contrary, the final words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," would appear to exclude the ascension definitely from the thought of this writer.

‡Luke xxiv.

but at Emmaus near Jerusalem, and afterward in Jerusalem itself. Subsequently, without going to Galilee at all, he parts from them and ascends to heaven from Bethany.

In the Fourth Gospel,* the story is still further altered and exaggerated. Mary Magdalene first discovers the removal of the stone from the sepulchre, and reports it to Peter and John, who run thither in haste. John arrives first, and discovers the sepulchre to be vacant, but with the grave clothes still remaining. In the synoptics, the resurrection is represented as an anticipated event which Jesus himself had prophesied; but here we are informed that Peter and John "as yet knew not the scripture, that he should rise from the dead." The "two men in shining garments" of Luke have here become "two angels in white, the one sitting at the foot and the other at the head of where the body of Jesus had lain." Jesus appears first to Mary and afterward to the disciples, apparently in Jerusalem or the near vicinity, passing mysteriously into their midst, where they sat with closed doors. He shows them his wounded hands and side, and permits doubting Thomas to thrust his finger into the wound. Subsequently, in Galilee, he eats and drinks with the disciples. The Fourth Gospel contains no record of the ascension; but the long and circumstantial account of his reappearances concludes with the remarkable

*John xx., xxi. In the Fourth Gospel, Mary does not recognize Jesus when he addresses her, but supposes him to be the gardener; in Luke, the disciples converse with him a long time before they discover his identity,—most improbable circumstances, tending to discredit the entire story.

assertion, "There are also many other things that Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."*

The striking and indisputable evidences thus presented in the gospel narratives of the gradual growth and exaggeration of the legend, together with the evident contradictions of the different writers, even were their personalities known and their reliability as witnesses incontestable, would justify us in relegating the entire story to the region of myth and legend, in which there is no substantial basis of actual fact. All that we can rationally infer from these relations is the probability that the sepulchre of Jesus was visited soon after his burial, and discovered to be empty. We can only conjecture in regard to the actual disposition of the body. It may have been removed by friendly hands to prevent the violation of the burial-place by enemies, or by the Roman authorities to thwart the curiosity of the disciples or the inhabitants of the neighboring city. Renan even suggests the theory of a swoon and subsequent resuscitation,† noting the fact that the legs were not broken after the body was taken from the cross, as was the custom with crucified malefactors. This hypothesis, however, hardly appears reasonable.

*John xxi., 25.

†So also the author of *Supernatural Religion*, who notes that the body remained upon the cross a much shorter time than usual. The question would then rise, however, what became of Jesus after his resuscitation? The difficulties in answering this question consistently with the prevalent belief in a supernatural resurrection are greater than those involved in the other solution.

Though the story of the resurrection is thus seen to have no rational foundation, even in the circumstantial accounts of the gospel writers, there is abundant evidence that the legend obtained very early credence among the disciples and followers of Jesus. Nor is it in any way remarkable that this should be the case. The immediate followers of Jesus were, in the main, a rude, uneducated people, believing in the possibility of all sorts of miraculous occurrences, and especially impressed with the belief in the general resurrection of the just at the advent of the heavenly kingdom. Profoundly influenced by the life and teachings of the Master, confidently regarding him as the expected Messiah of his people, recovering from the first shock of his tragical removal, and informed that his sepulchre had been visited and found vacant, —confirming this assertion, doubtless, with their own vision,—what could be more natural than that the thought should take possession of them that he had risen, becoming, as Paul declares, the "first-fruits" * of the final resurrection? The thought no sooner occurred than it found utterance: "He is risen! He has triumphed over his enemies. He will come again, sustained by the infinite power of the heavenly Father, and complete his work." If the synoptical tradition is reliable, they had abundant reason for this expectation in the promises of Jesus himself.† It is quite probable, however, that the language here attributed to him had its origin, or suffered material modification, after the belief in the resurrec-

* I. Cor. xv., 20. † Mark ix., 31; Matt. xvii., 23, etc.

tion as an accomplished fact had been generally received among his followers; growing, doubtless, out of some assurance which he had given of the general resurrection at the anticipated advent of the heavenly kingdom.

Paul's Doctrine of the Resurrection.

Paul's doctrine of the resurrection, unlike that of the Gospels, did not involve the belief in the resuscitation of the physical body. With him, it presupposed no such reanimation of flesh and blood and bones, of gaping wounds and bodily appetites, as is described to us in the gospel stories. "Flesh and blood," he declared, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* A spiritual body possessing form and substance, doubtless, but of an ethereal nature, and without the fleshly weaknesses and appetites of the present life, was to be the habitation of the soul in the life to come. Paul's conception appears to have been, not that Jesus had been restored bodily to life, but that, in spiritual form, he was "raised from the dead"; that is, that he was released from *sheol*, the resting-place of the dead prior to the general resurrection, and had ascended to paradise, the dwelling-place of God and the angels, whence he would soon return to judge the world and inaugurate the heavenly kingdom.

Paul expressly declares that his own vision of the crucified Jesus was of precisely the same char-

*I. Cor. xv., 50. Read the entire chapter for a better understanding of Paul's doctrine of the resurrection. Also I. Thess. iv., 13-18.

acter as that of the other apostles.* He bases his claim to be an apostle, indeed, upon this fact. From his own account of this vision, we readily gather the conclusion that it was an experience entirely subjective in its character. Paul appears to have had a peculiarly susceptible nervous organization, and to have been subject to visions and ecstasies. This, indeed, he admits and describes, saying of one such experience that he knew not "whether he was in the body or out of the body."† The testimony of Paul, therefore, which is the earliest and most reliable testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, appears to be based wholly upon a subjective vision, and cannot be held to substantiate the objective fact of his bodily reanimation and reappearance.

The Early Life of Paul.

The great Apostle of Christianity to the Gentiles was born at Tarsus, in Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, about ten years after the commencement of the Christian era, as usually reckoned, or some fourteen years, probably, after the birth of Jesus. His parents were Pharisaic Jews; and they bestowed upon him the name of Saul, after the first king of united Israel. He was brought up, as he declares, "after the strictest sect of the Pharisees." His education was doubtless superior to that of any of the immediate disciples of Jesus. Among his teachers was the celebrated Rabbi Gamaliel. His writings give evidence of some acquaintance with the Greek poets, and to a greater

* I. Cor. ix., 1; xv., 8; Gal. i., 12, ff. † II. Cor. i., 4.

nd notable degree with the Platonic philosophy s well as with the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul's miliarity with the philosophy of Plato has often een recognized, and has recently been made the ubject of an interesting essay by Dr. Alexander Vilder, one of our most indefatigable students of ncient philosophy and the Oriental religions.* n able orthodox scholar, Rev. Dr. Storrs, also recognized this fact, incidentally, in a late address, in hich he asserted of Saint Augustine that a passge from Cicero led him to Plato, thence naturally Paul, and thence to the study of the Christian eligion.†

The parents of Saul had acquired the rights nd privileges of Roman citizens, either as *libertini*, r emancipated slaves, or for some special service ndered the Roman State. In accordance with a revalent Jewish custom, which required that very youth should be instructed in some useful rt, Saul learned that of tent-making; or rather, robably, the weaving of the coarse cloth called cilicia,"—from the name of his native province, -of which tents and sails were usually made.

The description of his personal appearance can ardly be better given than in the words of Prof. llen: "Paul, then, according to the legends, was man little of stature,—under five feet high, they ay,—high-shouldered, beetle-browed, with head ent forward, his beard and hair at middle life of n iron gray; his brow wide, his face thin, his ye deep and somewhat sad; the dark eye, the

* *Paul and Plato*, by Prof. Alexander Wilder.
† Rev. Dr. Richard S. Storrs, in address at anniversary f the Union for Christian Work, Brooklyn, N.Y.

marked features, we may suppose, of the strong Jewish type. His bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible,—so his enemies said. That his speech was hesitating and slow, when not aroused, we may believe easily enough. It was so with Demosthenes; it was so with Mahomet, who, next to Paul, has shown the most burning and effective eloquence of the Semitic race, and in whom, like Paul, that barrier of hesitation gave way on occasion to a hot flood of eager and passionate words, that stirred great floods of popular conviction." *

His Advocacy of Judaism: Hebrew Proselytes.

Brought up after the strictest tradition of the Hebrew formalists, he doubtless early became a propagandist of his faith, and a vigorous opponent, not merely of alien religions, but more especially of those false brethren of his own religion who had departed from the faith of their fathers. The Jews of this period, already scattered in diverse quarters of the world, had begun to make proselytes from among the heathen peoples who surrounded them, and were thus extending their faith beyond the boundaries of the Hebrew race. These proselytes, when received into full communion, were circumcised and fulfilled all the ceremonial observances enjoined by the law. Others became partial converts, accepting the Hebrew doctrine of the unity of God, abjuring idolatry, and sometimes attending worship at the syna-

* *Christian History*, vol. i.

gogues, but without consenting to the rite of circumcision or binding themselves to the minute observances of Pharisaic ritualism. These partial converts to Judaism were termed "proselytes of the gate." Many of them became early converts to the Christian faith, and differences soon arose between them and those followers of Jesus who were also strict observers of the law.

Stephen's Martyrdom: The Conversion of Saul.

Stephen, one of the earliest martyrs of the new religion, was a Greek-speaking Jew,—the leader of the Hellenic or liberal party in the Christian community before Paul's conversion, as opposed to the mass of the Jews and to the stricter sect of Judaizing Christians. Already, we find the germs of a division of the advocates of the new religion into conflicting parties according to their original status as Jews or Pagans,—a breach which, as we shall see hereafter, ultimately widened into an almost fatal schism. Heretofore, the Christians had been popularly and justly regarded merely as a sect of the Jews,—the sect of the fulfilled Messiahship. "Christianity," says Dean Milman, "as yet was but an extended Judaism: it was preached by Jews, it was addressed to Jews, it was limited, national, exclusive."* But with the conversion of "proselytes of the gate," and of heathen who had never adopted the Jewish faith, a new element, and for the time a troublesome one, was introduced into the infant community. Stephen, a leader or representative of this element, accused of violating the

* *History of Christianity.*

law of Moses in favor of the Hellenists, was stoned to death according to the provisions of that law, Saul beholding and consenting to his martyrdom.*

Fanatic though he was, however, there was doubtless something in this scene—in the nobility and heroism of the martyr—which touched the heart and conscience of the Hebrew propagandist. While travelling toward Damascus, soon after, with the purpose of continuing there the work of purifying the religion of his people by the persecution of its enemies, he saw around him a blinding light, beheld a vision of the crucified Jesus, and became conscious of the peculiar subjective experience which led to his conversion. He entered Damascus, no longer the advocate of Pharisaic Judaism, but a disciple of the Prophet of Nazareth.†

At what time he signalized his change of faith by substituting the Greek name Paul or Paulos for his original Hebrew designation, we are not informed. He probably assumed the new name soon after his conversion, perhaps at the time of his baptism. It has been thought by some that he adopted it from that of Sergius Paulus,‡ the Roman pro-consul of Cyprus, a place visited by Paul early in his missionary career. Sergius Paulus was a man of liberal and enlightened mind, a friend and protector of the Christians, though he was never baptized into the new faith. "Paulos," however, was a sort of "nickname" in use among the Greeks and Greek-speaking Romans, meaning

* Acts vii., viii.
† Compare Gal. i., 11-16, with the story of Saul's conversion in Acts ix., 1-9.
‡ See Acts xiii., 7.

"the little"; and it may have been first applied to Saul in derision, and finally adopted by him in humble recognition of his insignificant size and appearance.

Paul's Missionary Labors: His Relation to the older Apostles.

About three years elapsed after Paul's conversion before he began his remarkable career as a Christian missionary.* More than half this time was spent in Arabia; the balance, we know not where,—except that he returned, first, to Damascus,†—or in what manner he occupied himself. Doubtless, he was to some degree an invalid during this period; and it is probable that he also felt the necessity of acquainting himself further with the doctrines and traditions of the new faith before he appeared as its public advocate. This period of retirement was perhaps in part devoted to solitary meditation, as was the custom with philosophers and the teachers of religion.

The limits of this discussion will not permit us to follow Paul through all the details of his remarkable career as an advocate of Christianity. After this period of retirement, he visited Peter and James at Jerusalem,‡ but apparently received little encouragement from them in his new labor. It is not remarkable that the older apostles should hesitate to give full credence to the honesty of purpose of their old-time persecutor, especially as they regarded his claim to be an apostle—a claim which he based, not upon their commission, but

* Gal. i., 18. † Gal. i., 17. ‡ Gal. i., 18, 19.

upon his own alleged communication with the risen Saviour—as a false and indefensible pretence which conflicted with their proper authority as the chosen companions and representatives of Jesus. Paul made another brief visit to Jerusalem fourteen years later * for the purpose of declaring his gospel and maintaining the rights of the Grecian and non-Jewish converts. He also met Peter once at Antioch; but, beyond this, he appears to have had little intercourse with the personal followers of Jesus.

The Two Parties in the Early Church.

In the discussion which arose between Peter and Paul and their respective adherents, in reference to the necessity of submitting to the rites and ordinances of Judaism as a preliminary to Christian baptism, Paul finally announced the principle that the acceptance of the gospel abrogated the necessity for the formal observances required by the law,† and claimed complete freedom for the convert as to the adoption of the rite of circumcision, and other points in dispute between the Judaizing and the Gentile Christians. The "Acts of the Apostles," which evidently perverts the facts of history in the interest of its obvious overmastering purpose, endeavors to convey the impression that compromise and agreement were successfully accomplished during the lifetime of the apostles. The probability is, however, that the conflict continued, and was transmitted to later generations.

* Gal. ii., 1.
† Rom. vii., 4-6; II. Cor. iii., 6-18; Gal. iii., 22-29; iv., 5, etc.

We have Paul's own declaration, on the occasion of his interview with Peter at Antioch, that he "withstood" him "to his very face." *

The evidences of this conflict in the writings of Paul, and on the opposing side in the Apocalypse and Petrine Epistles, as well as in the writings of Hegisippus and others of the early Fathers of the Church, are very numerous. In the Book of Revelations, the followers of Paul are doubtless denounced under the names of Balaamites and Nicolaitines,† and are charged with various offences, including the eating of meats offered to idols. Paul himself discouraged the use of such meats when their character and connection with pagan sacrifices were known; but he allows exceptions in certain cases, and doubtless some of his Gentile followers were even more liberal than he was in their disregard of the injunctions of the Jewish law. The author of the Apocalypse, who was probably the Apostle John, doubtless regarded Paul as the instigator of these "false doctrines"; for he expressly excludes him in his enumeration of the twelve apostles,‡ and elsewhere commends the church at Ephesus because it could not bear "those who said they were apostles, and were not, but tried them and found them false apostles,"§— an evident allusion to Paul. Heathenism and Judaism were world-wide antipodes in the thought of the writer of the Apocalypse. The former is denounced as the kingdom of Antichrist, and the Gentiles exist only to share the final fate of this arch enemy of the heavenly kingdom.

* Gal. ii., 11.
† Rev. ii., 14-20.
‡ Rev. xxi., 14.
§ Rev. ii., 2.

The early Fathers of the Church generally ignored Paul or discredited his authority. Clement of Rome and Polycarp possibly allude to him, once each, in passages of doubtful authenticity.* Papias, who wrote about the middle of the second century, nowhere mentions Paul or any of his followers, though he speaks of the other apostles. Justin Martyr, who must have been acquainted with the labors and writings of Paul, studiously avoids any allusion to him; and Hegisippus refers to him, though not mentioning his name, only to contradict one of his assertions. He quotes against Paul's statement, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him,"† the seemingly contradictory assertion of Jesus, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."‡ The earlier recognized leaders in the Church appear to have sympathized rather with the Judaizing Christians than with the followers of Paul. In the final result, as we know, there were compromise and reconciliation, and upon essentially Pauline ground; but Paul himself obtained little recognition from the early Church. The Catholic hierarchy appropriated his theology, but traced back its credentials to the name and authority of his antagonist, the Apostle Peter. Of the two parties, the Petrine or Judaizing Christians, early known as the Nazarenes, and

*The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians is adjudged by the author of *Supernatural Religion* and other able critics to be largely interpolated. The passage in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians in which Paul's name occurs is found only in a Latin text of doubtful reliability.

† I. Cor. ii., 9. ‡ Matt. xiii., 16.

afterward as the Ebionites, whose tenets and peculiarities will be further described in a subsequent lecture, were finally absorbed into the great current of orthodox Christian life or died out for want of a further *raison d'être;** while the extreme Paulinists evolved into the heretical sect of the Marcionites, who, with their Gnostic coadjutors, ultimately succumbed also to the widening and deepening current of Christian Orthodoxy.

The Conclusion of Paul's Labors; his Death.

The missionary labors of Paul extended to all the great capitals of the west,—to Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, and Rome, to the barbarian neighborhoods of Lystra, Galatia, and Melita. We hear of him in Cyprus, Salamis, and Paphos, in Pamphylia in Asia Minor, at Iconium, Philippi, and Thessalonica. Everywhere, he found colonies of Jews and proselytes. He taught in their synagogues, converted many, especially of the Hellenic proselytes, and established congregations of the new religion. Often, he met with encouragement; oftener, perhaps, with distrust, abuse, or violent opposition. "Of the Jews," he says, "five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night I have

* The growth of a Christian Orthodoxy, based upon the dogmas of the miraculous birth of Jesus and of his practical equality with God, soon put an end to Christian proselyting among the Jews, since these dogmas were abhorrent to and wholly irreconcilable with the principles of Judaism. The sects who rejected these dogmas were denounced as heretics, and ultimately excluded from the Christian communion. Thus was Jesus crucified anew in the person of his own followers, in the name of the ideal Christ.

been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."*

Charged with stirring up public dissensions, and carried finally to Rome for trial by reason of his appeal to his rights as a Roman citizen, he remained there about three years, and then passed forever from the light of history. The traditions of his subsequent journeyings and labors in Spain, Gaul, and Britain, are, doubtless, wholly unreliable. The probable termination of his stay in Rome nearly approximates to the period of the Christian persecutions, instigated by the infamous Nero. Some have supposed that both Paul and Peter suffered martyrdom in Rome at this time. It is hardly probable, however, that Peter ever visited Rome at all. Tradition declares that Paul suffered death by the sword instead of the ordinary modes of crucifixion or burning,—a privilege to which he would have been entitled by reason of his Roman citizenship. All this, however, is purely conjectural: we really know nothing certainly in regard to the time or manner of his death.†

The Doctrines of Paul: his Christology.

It remains now for us to consider the character of Paul's teaching, and its influence upon the subsequent development of the Christian faith. In

*II. Cor. xi., 24-27.

†See Baur, *History of the Church in the First Three Christian Centuries;* also, Renan, "The Antichrist" (vol. iv. of *The Origins of Christianity*).

his Christology there is a manifest advance from the earlier tradition of the Synoptical Gospels. "In trying to understand this phase of his opinion," says Prof. Allen, "we must bear in mind that Paul had never known Jesus as a man,—'after the flesh,' as he phrases it. If he had, we should probably have never known anything of his Christology." In his earlier writings, we have the clear expression of his belief, held in common with the other disciples, that Jesus had "risen from the dead," and ascended to paradise, soon to return and establish his eternal kingdom upon the regenerated earth. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," he says, "with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

Paul appears to accept the synoptical doctrine of a final judgment and eternal punishment for the sinner, † though certain passages in his writings have been held by some to suggest the belief in the ultimate salvation of all men. "Jesus," he says, "shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty

* I. Thess. iv., 16, 17.

† The punishment, however, is characterized as "eternal destruction" or "eternal death" instead of "eternal fire" or "torment," and may not necessarily indicate a belief in eternal conscious suffering. The "eternal life" on earth in the heavenly kingdom for the righteous appears to be contrasted with the "eternal death" of the wicked. See Romans ii., 5-14; iii., 5-8, 22; vi., 23; viii., 9-14, 29, 30; ix., 14-18, 27, 28; x., 1-18; xi., 13, 14, 20-22; xiii., 4, 5; xiv., 10-12; I. Cor. i., 18-27; iii., 12-17; vi., 9-11; ix., 22-27; II. Cor. ii., 15, 16; v., 10; xiii., 5-7; Gal. vi., 6-9; Phil. i., 27-30; iii., 17-21; Col. iii., 12, 25; II. Thess. ii., 8-12.

angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, . . . who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."* As the earliest belief in the advent of the heavenly kingdom was gradually dimmed by disappointment and long-waiting for the anticipated catastrophe, Paul's views of Christ become less objective and real, more subjective and mystical. "In the Corinthians," says Allen, "Christ is first of all a spiritual Lord and Chief, 'the head of every man,' soul of a body having many members, the mystic 'rock' of the old Covenant, the source of doctrine and authority." "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh," says the apostle, "yet now know we him no more."† He is represented as the deliverer, who has "redeemed us from the curse of the law." He is the "second Adam," who gives us life, as the first Adam brought us death.

Later, Paul's thought of Christ becomes still more vague and visionary, retaining scarcely a feature of the man Jesus of the simple narrative of the Synoptical Gospels. He is a type of the divine energy,—a personified idea, similar to the wisdom of the Cabalists and the Apocryphal writers; "the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person"; "in the form of God, though not claiming equality with God"; "image of the invisible, first-born of the whole creation." Here we are on the very verge of the mystic doctrine of the Logos, which subsequently appears in the Fourth Gospel, and finds its exagger-

* II. Thess. i., 6–9. † II. Cor. v., 16.

ated reflection in the mysticism of the Gnostic schools.

Paul's Doctrine of the Atonement.

Though Paul himself does not expressly teach the doctrine of a sacrificial atonement,—a doctrine which, as we have seen, is wholly absent from the Synoptical Gospels,—we may yet trace the first decided steps toward its development in his writings. "Paul," says Matthew Arnold, "knows nothing of the sacrificial atonement: what Paul knows of is a *reconciling sacrifice*.* The true substitute for Paul is not the substitute of Christ in men's stead as a victim on the cross to God's offended justice: it is the substitute by which the believer in his own person repeats Christ's dying to sin."† Yet in the language, and doubtless also in the thought of Paul, we cannot fail to note an evident step in the direction of the doctrine of the atonement. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, of which Paul is almost certainly not the author, this doctrine is announced in much plainer terms than we can discover in any of the genuine Pauline Epistles; while it reaches its full development in the Fourth Gospel, wherein Christ appears as a substitute for the paschal lamb, an atoning sacrifice for human sins. The manifest exaggeration of Paul's doctrine of the atonement by both Catholic and Protestant theologians is doubtless a legacy of misunderstanding derived from the misinterpretations of Augustine. Writing in the fourth and fifth centuries of our era and trained in the rigid school of Latin

* See II. Cor. v., 14–21.
† "Saint Paul and Protestantism," by Matthew Arnold.

scholasticism, probably neither speaking nor writing the Greek language, he appears to have put his own exact and unyielding dogmatical conceptions in the place of the Oriental and symbolical expressions of the apostle to the Gentiles, thus petrifying symbol into dogma and substituting the rigid distortion of death for the suggestive and flowing life of the original thought.

The Doctrine of Salvation by Faith.

Throughout the later and more important period of its development, the religion of the Hebrews made righteousness the foundation stone of its spiritual edifice. The sense of personal sin, of violation of the law of God, was ever present with the true follower of Judaism. Even the formalities of latter-day Pharisaism did not wholly obscure the strong ethical principle involved in the ancient Hebrew faith and pre-eminently emphasized in the writings of the prophets. With Paul, this sense of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," this striving after personal righteousness, was probably always present. In it, doubtless, lay the secret of his sudden conversion. In it, also, lay the root of his Christian theology. As a Jew, the escape from sin and its penalties had been possible to him only through strict and rigid obedience to the law. As a Christian, emancipated from the law, he found the means of escape in the acceptance of the doctrine of "salvation by faith."*

Sin, to Paul, was something more than the negation of good, a mere phase of moral experience:

* See Rom. iv.-viii.; Gal. ii.-vi., etc.

it was an objective reality. It was an actual entity which obtained a lodgement in man, and controlled his actions in antagonism to all that was right,—in antagonism, even, to his own will. "Now, then," he says, "it is no more I that do it, but sin (ἁμαρτία) that dwelleth in me." * Paul had assimilated from the Oriental philosophies that doctrine of the eternal antagonism between matter and God, between body and spirit, which is still more clearly expressed in the mystical dualism of the Fourth Gospel, and reached its highest contemporaneous development in the doctrines of the various Gnostic sects. With this Oriental dualism, he had combined the Hebrew notion of the inheritance of sin from the original transgression of Adam. He had also derived from the Eastern or Greek philosophies the metaphysical conception of the threefold nature of man, comprising body, soul, and spirit.† He *entified* or objectified these metaphysical conceptions, and they became to him realities.

The Ethics of Paul: His Doctrine of the Crucifixion.

The ethics of the Gospels were purely ideal and personal, adapted to the perfect society of the ideal kingdom of heaven, aiming to prepare individuals for it by the closest possible approximation to its conditions under the existing social order. The associations of Jesus were limited and personal, and his ethical system bore the impress of these environing limitations. The associations of Paul, on the contrary, were varied and cosmopolitan.

* Rom. vii., 17.
† I. Cor. xv., 35-54, especially verses 40, 44, 45.

His ethics, therefore, were naturally social and organic, less personal and ideal than those of Jesus, and adapted to the existing relations of a more varied and complex society. Nevertheless, his appeal to men, though on a less ideal plane, was essentially direct and personal, based as it was upon his own strong conviction of sin. He did not speak to men as one above them, but as one of them. His conception of Jesus was to him, and through him to others, an inspiration to right living, chiefly because he saw in the Master "a man tempted in all respects like as we are, yet without sin."

Paul's doctrine of "salvation by faith," accordingly, was no hard and fast dogma, as interpreted by the preachers of the orthodox creed. He preached "Christ and him crucified," indeed, as the foundation of his faith; but, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,"* we perceive that he regarded the crucifixion as somewhat more than a personal and objective fact,—as a symbol, rather, of a subjective experience of Jesus which might be repeated in every human soul. Christ, in his conception, as Matthew Arnold has so ably shown, was already "crucified in the flesh" before the final agony of Calvary: he was crucified in the process of putting under foot the temptations of the flesh, —those tendencies to sin with which he was beset, in common with all other men, but which he, unlike all other men, had successfully overcome.

*Gal. ii., 20.

The "faith" advocated by Paul, therefore, was no mere acceptance of irrational dogma, but the surety that by a like process of subjecting the body to the spirit, the lusts of the flesh to the demands of an ideal righteousness, all men, like him, could be "crucified with Christ," and yet live the higher and nobler life of the spiritual man. His conception of spirituality is no mere product of a sublimated mysticism: it is rooted firmly in the ethical principle. It is in this sense of spiritual unity with Christ through triumph over sin that he exultingly exclaims, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and, if children, then heirs,—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,—that, if we suffer with him, we may also be glorified together."*

Paul's Dualism.—Predestination and Election.—The Secret of Jesus.

There is much in Paul's phraseology, doubtless, that gives comfort to the devotees of modern Orthodoxy. The philosophical statement of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and election is certainly there.† The dualistic conception of the eternal conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the antagonism of God and matter, announced by Paul, is not consistent with a profound philosophy of the universe, or even with an intelligent theism. The God of Paul is less

* Romans viii., 16, 17.

† Romans viii., 29, 30; xi., 5–7; II. Cor. xiii., 5, 6; Col. iii., 12; I. Thess. v., 9; II. Thess. ii., 10–12. The first chapter of Ephesians, doubtfully Pauline, contains a yet clearer statement of this doctrine.

fatherly and more despotic than the heavenly Father of Jesus. In other respects, however, he approximated closely to the thought of the Nazarene prophet. The "dead works" which he discredited were not alone or chiefly the natural fruits of righteous endeavor, but rather the formal observances of the ceremonial law.* The "faith" that he advocated was faith that the experience and triumph of Jesus were possible, in some degree, to all men; that any man, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, by being crucified with Jesus, by subjecting the selfish and animal impulses of his nature to the moral and spiritual demands of the higher law, as Jesus had done, would be raised with him into the higher life of the spirit. In this belief, which based salvation upon inner motive rather than outer act, consciously or unconsciously he caught the very secret of Jesus, and justified his claim to the title of an apostle.

Paul the Type of Protestantism.—His Relation to Existing Society.

If in our present study we have not discovered the Paul of the Puritan theology, neither, I think, have we found precisely the Paul of Matthew Arnold. If the Christ of Paul is seen to be an ideal Christ rather than the man of Nazareth, so in lesser degree, perhaps, the Paul of Matthew Arnold is an idealized Paul. If the apostle to the Gentiles clothes his philosophy in Orientalisms, as the great critic declares, the philosophy is nevertheless there beneath the garment, and in it the germs of much

* Romans iii., 20, 27, 28, etc.

that is harsh and irrational in the later Christian creeds. As he stands revealed to the rational investigator, Paul is, I think, Mr. Arnold to the contrary notwithstanding, the natural prototype and apostle of Protestantism, even of dissenting Protestantism. The great apostle would have been quite out of place in the fold of a conventional body of believers like the modern Church of England. He protested against the close communion and legal literalism of the Judaizing Christians. He protested against the formal and external righteousness of the ceremonial law. His protests were always "vigorous," if not "rigorous"; and division and sectarianism followed in their wake, as they have followed the late protests of Luther and Calvin.

In the Christianity of Paul, the primitive social communism of the Gospels was already somewhat modified.* We hear less of a community of goods, less of the exaltation of poverty. With a wider social horizon, a less ideal and more practical ethical system than that of Jesus, Paul rendered himself liable to a more exacting and less favorable criticism by the exigent social standards of a later time and a higher civilization. Like Jesus, he uttered no word against the existing institution of slavery. He even recognized its legality and binding force by returning to Philemon the slave Onesimus, though with the qualifying injunction to receive him as a brother in Christ as well as a

*There is a suggestion of it in II. Cor. viii., 10–15, and in the references to the *agapæ*, or "love-feast," the primitive communal meal of the early Christians (I. Cor. xi., 17–34, etc.).

legal bond-servant.* His views of marriage and of woman were ignoble and unsocial, bearing the degrading impress of the Orientalism which gave them birth, and which tinged all his philosophy.† The pessimistic conception of the existing world, implicit in the thought of Jesus, was explicit in the dualistic philosophy of Paul. Yet, with all his faults and imperfections, Paul as well as Jesus was a man of men.

Under the influence of the great apostle and his co-laborers, Christianity burst the bonds of nationality and race, and became a movement which aimed at nothing less than the spiritual conquest of the world. The religion of Jesus, as taught by Paul, still contained within it an emphasis and purpose supremely ethical. It retained the doctrine that man is to be judged by motive rather than by act, by inward intention rather than outward and formal observances. In this conception was latent the inevitable and logical sequence of a belief in human equality, ultimating in the reorganization of society under the form of a spiritual democracy; and in the promise of this social revolution lay the secret of the eager acceptance of the new religion by the masses of the toiling poor.

Free from the necessary limitations of the ethnic religions, emancipated from Judaism through the influence of Paul, Christianity contained within itself some of the germs of a universal religion. To what extent these germs were fertilized by

* Philemon. See also Col. iii., 22.
† I. Cor. vii., xi.; Col. iii., 18, etc.

contact with a congenial soil and atmosphere, in what manner their growth was thwarted and prevented by the assimilation of incongruous elements from the surrounding Paganism and by their own internal imperfections, it is our purpose to consider hereafter.

VIII.

THE CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

Duration and General Characteristics of the Period.

THE apostolic period in the history of the Christian Church is commonly reckoned to extend from the death of Jesus to the end of the first Christian century.* During the early portion of this period, as we have seen, a new element was intro uced into the Christian faith,—the element of universalism, as distinguished from the narrower Hebraism of the Judaizing followers of Peter and the original Galilean apostles. Doubtless, this feature may be shown to have a natural relationship and correspondence with much that had been latent in the thought of Jesus; but, if the propagation of the new doctrine had been left entirely with his personal followers and disciples, it is doubtful whether Christianity would ever have become more than an insignificant Jewish sect, which would have ceased to exist when the popular expectation of the immediate coming of the

*The necessary limitations of these papers will prevent a strictly chronological treatment of the history of the early Church. It will be our aim, however, to deviate from this method only when the requirements of a concise topical consideration of certain branches of our subject render such deviations inevitable.

heavenly kingdom had succumbed to the chill of weary waiting and successive disappointments.

The history of the growing faith, from the time of Paul to its final secular triumph and recognition by Constantine, is the history of the continued conflict and final reconciliation of its Pauline and Judaistic elements; of the rise of Gnosticism and the conflict with this and other so-called "heresies";* of the development of its Christology and dogmatic theology, culminating in the deification of Jesus; and of the evolution of the forms and ceremonies which ultimately constituted the ritual and sacraments of the Christian Church. Unless the circumstances and consequences of the conflict between the Hebrew and the Hellenic or Gentile parties are kept constantly in mind, the student of this intermediate phase of the development of the new religion will miss much of the significance of the leading features in its history. The mediation between these two parties was finally effected through the influence of the Alexandrian philosophy of Philo, the original purpose of which, in its ante-Christian phases, as we have seen, was to demonstrate the harmony of Platonism and Orientalism with the Mosaic law.† It was, therefore, the natural mediator between these diverse elements in Christianity. The documentary evidences of this reconciliation are found in the Acts of the Apostles, the tendency of which is

*The word "heresy" (Gr. αἵρεσις) had originally no opprobrious signification, but meant simply the "choice" or "accepted belief" of an opposing controversialist. In Greek philosophical writings, it was sometimes used to designate a philosophical principle or a particular sect or school of philosophy

†See Lecture II.

toward a modified Paulinism, in the non-Pauline Epistle to the Hebrews, in the Epistle of Barnabas, preserved to us among the so-called apocryphal writings, and other documents of like character. The chief witness on behalf of Paulinism is the great apostle himself, as represented in his authentic writings. The opposite side of the controversy is presented in the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse; in the writings generally of the early Fathers of the Church, and particularly in the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, to which we shall have occasion to refer hereafter. The final triumph of the Alexandrian mediation is attested by the reception of the Logos epic as authoritative scripture in the latter part of the second century.

Early Rites and Ceremonies: Baptism.

With the final accomplishment of the reconciliation through the deification of Jesus, the rites and sacraments of the Church, which had gradually taken form after the subversion of the more marked Judaizing features of apostolic Christianity, were elevated into greater prominence. It is our purpose now to trace the natural origin and development of some of these ceremonies. The rite of baptism early came to be regarded as the chief symbol and sacrament of the Christian faith, assuming an importance and significance akin to circumcision in the ordinances of Judaism. Baptism was probably adopted by the Jews from Persian or Chaldean sources,* and was adminis-

*The name "Sabean," often applied to the ancient Persians and Chaldeans, means, simply, "the immerser" or "the washer"; and ceremonial ablution was an important rite of the Zoroastrian and Magian religions.

tered by such pre-Christian sects as the Essenes and the disciples of John. In its original Jewish form, it differed little, save in its symbolical signification, from an ordinary bath. It was intended both to secure bodily cleanliness and to symbolize at the same time the removal of the stains of sin from the soul. Among the Jews and early Christians of Palestine, those submitting to this rite came down to some convenient place by the side of the Jordan River, sometimes singly, but oftener in families, and having completely disrobed, as is not unfrequently the public and promiscuous custom in Eastern countries, even at the present day, they plunged into the river, and entirely submerged themselves in its waters.

In its earliest Christian phase, baptism was only administered as a sign of voluntary repentance and admission to the membership of the Christian community. It was not administered to children or to those of any age who were born into the new faith. With the decline of Judaistic tendencies among the early Christians, however, baptism came to be deemed an essential symbol of the Christian religion, and was therefore thenceforward administered to all adult believers in connection with a public profession of their faith. The earliest baptismal formula in use among the Palestinian Christians was, "I immerse you into the name of the Lord Jesus." The familiar trinitarian recognition of the "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" did not come into use before the second century. The Greek word (*βαπτίζω*), which the translators of the New Testament have appro-

priated without translating, means simply and uniformly "to immerse." This was unquestionably the original form of the rite. In localities where the facilities for complete immersion were wanting, however, there seems to have been an occasional substitution, at a very early day, of the shower-bath,—not a mere sprinkling, as in later times, but the use of a sufficient quantity of water to envelop the entire person.* In its earliest Christian phase, baptism appears to have been regarded as a symbol not only of spiritual purification, but also of the resurrection. The sins of the flesh were washed away, the "carnal body" was buried beneath the waters, and rose from them into the new life of the spiritual man. As Christianity assimilated Gentile converts, and advanced westward to cooler climates, and especially to Rome, where the people were familiar with the ceremony of *lustration*, the rite lost more and more its primitive character. At last, the idea of physical cleanliness remained wholly in abeyance; and it retained only its spiritual and symbolical signification. It was not, however, until long after the Christianization of the Roman Empire that "sprinkling" was generally substituted for immersion.†

Subsequent to the early part of the second cen-

* See the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, where this form of the rite is expressly authorized. It is noteworthy, however, that the substitute is not called "baptism" (immersion), but simply "pouring."

† In a like manner, the sacrificial rite among the Zoroastrians degenerated into a mere symbolical presentation of a single hair of a heifer in the presence of the sacred flame instead of the immolation of the entire animal. The Eastern Church still recognizes immersion as the proper form of the baptismal ceremony.

tury, after the organization of the Christian congregations had been perfected, and the three orders of deacons, presbyters, and bishops were fully recognized, the rite of baptism could be administered only by the bishop or presiding elder of the church. Usually there was but one place for baptism in each town or city, and that was never in a church. There was but one time for the administration of the rite in every year,—the period between Easter and Pentecost. Baptism was always administered at midnight, and never in public. In an outer chamber, the converts, of either sex, disrobed to but a single garment, and, turning toward the region of the sunset, uttered together a defiance of the evil one, saying, "I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works, all thy pomp, and all thy service." They then turned toward the east, and by the utterance of an appropriate verbal formula recognized the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Passing into an inner chamber, in the presence of a deacon or deaconess, the entire company disrobed completely, and stood up naked to be questioned by the bishop. Satisfactory answers having been given, their bare limbs and bodies were rubbed with oil from head to foot. They then plunged into the water, were again anointed after emerging from it, were clothed in white gowns symbolical of their purification, and received the "kiss of peace" from the bishop and a taste of milk and honey. They afterwards recognized their new communion by repeating for the first time the Lord's Prayer.*

*For this account of the origin and earliest form of the baptismal ceremony, reliance has been placed, in the main,

Many of the leading features of this ceremonial were evidently of Eastern and probably of Persian origin. Our modern sticklers for "immersion" would hardly advocate the adoption of the original custom in its entirety. With the lapse of time, many changes have affected the administration of this rite. A magical efficacy came to be assigned to it at an early day; and even infants were regarded as doomed to eternal misery, if dying unbaptized. To forestall this doom, the rite was sometimes administered to them with most unseemly haste. At the present time, instead of the complete bath, we have usually the substitute of sprinkling with a few drops of water. Instead of anointing the entire body with oil, we have the application of a few drops only, as in the Catholic ceremonial, or the total disuse of inunction, as in nearly all the Protestant sects. Instead of the bishop alone, any clergyman may administer the rite. Instead of making adults the only recipients of it, as in the earliest times, it is now usually administered in childhood. In regard to this and to other ritualistic observances, however, we of the liberal faith will doubtless agree that letter and form profit little, and that a custom which has come to be regarded as a magical rite rather than a natural symbol of spiritual purification is better honored in the breach than in the observance.

Religious Services: The Lord's Day.

The earliest Christian congregations had no

upon the interesting testimony of Dean Stanley in *Christian Institutions*. Care has been taken, however, to make comparison with other reliable authorities.

church-buildings or houses devoted exclusively to religious assemblies. Meetings for worship were commonly held in private dwellings. The usual and most convenient room for the assembly was the *triclinium*, or large dining-hall, found in nearly every house of the Roman period. Around this room were arranged cushions or low divans, upon which the worshippers sat or reclined during the reading of the Scriptures—the Old Testament only—and the formal address or exhortation. A raised seat at one end of the room, the *cathedra*, or chair, was occupied by the reader or minister. The custom of meeting on the "Lord's day," or first day of the week, for religious services and social converse, is of early origin, dating from the apostolic period. At this time, however, the day had acquired none of the peculiar sanctity attaching to the Jewish Sabbath, and was never, as in later times, confounded with it. The seventh day was still observed, according to the mandates of the law, by the Jewish Christians. The earliest Christian writers outside the limited circle of the Nazarenes, who compare the two days, regard the Lord's day, not as a continuance of the Sabbath, but as an institution of an essentially different character. Christianity, according to their view, abrogated the Hebrew commandments. Owing to its principle of universalism, it regarded all places as alike sacred and all days as alike holy and dedicated to the service of God. Ignatius of Antioch contrasted the Lord's day with the Sabbath as something done away with. Justin Martyr says that Christianity requires, not

one particular Sabbath, but a perpetual Sabbath. The Christians were regarded as atheists by their enemies, because they had no temples, no images, no altars, no festivals, no holy days. The nature of their baptismal ceremony and the privacy of their meetings threw an air of secrecy and concealment around their religion, which caused it to be viewed with distrust and suspicion by intelligent adherents of the older faiths.

The Agape, or "Love Feast,"—Forerunner of the Eucharist.

In the same room, the *triclinium*, after sunset, the congregation again gathered, reclining as before around the sides of the room, to partake of the agape, or "love feast." * This prototype of the sacrament of the eucharist † was originally merely a commemorative social meal of a communal character, to which each contributed a portion of food as to a picnic. Bread and wine were essential elements in this pleasant social repast; but other articles of food, particularly fish, which accompanied bread in the ancient meal as commonly as cheese or butter does with us, were usually present. The poor, who were unable to contribute to the repast, were always welcome to partake with the others. This common meal was doubtless a survival of the simple communism of Jesus and the apostles. In the "paschal feast" or "last supper" of the Master with his disciples, which this repast was intended to commemorate, the wine was doubtless served in large bowls, and

* Gr. ἀγάπη. † Gr. εὐχαριστίας, "thanksgiving."

mixed with water, as was the universal custom of the time. The bread was the unleavened bread of the passover, and fish and perhaps other simple articles of food were doubtless present.

At the conclusion of the "love feast" as well as at the breaking up of the earlier meetings, the company parted, exchanging the "kiss of peace." In some congregations, this interchange of salutations was confined to those of the same sex; in others, no distinction was observed. We have numerous evidences in the New Testament Epistles and writings of the Fathers that these social repasts, at first held daily, not unfrequently became scenes of boisterous revelry and undue license.* These abuses brought upon the churches the condemnation of the apostles, and doubtless operated to lessen the frequency of the communal meals, which ultimately degenerated into the monthly celebration of the eucharist. With the common acceptance of the conception of Christ as the paschal lamb,—the sacrifice substituted for the offering of the Jewish passover,—a conception which, though suggested by Paul, we first find fully developed in the Fourth Gospel, the commemorative repast took on a new and more solemn character. From the Oriental and symbolical expressions of Jesus,—"This is my body," "This is my blood,"—the bald literalism of the scholastic theologians subsequently developed the dogmas of transubstantiation and consubstantiation, giving rise to that notable metaphysical controversy which in after generations distracted and divided

*I. Cor. xi., 20-34.

the Christian Church. As in the case of baptism, we have in the modern ceremony of the communion an instance of degeneration, transfiguration, and survival, accompanied by the assumption of a magical efficacy as pertaining to the rite, which leaves it with but little resemblance either in form or idea to the primitive custom of the apostolic age.

Origin of the Priesthood: Clerical Orders.

"In the first beginning of Christianity," says Dean Stanley, "there was no such institution as the clergy." The earliest Christian communities were not organized with any view to permanence. Believing in the near approach of the revolution which would substitute a new and divine social order for that then existing, the converts came together naturally for mutual sympathy and encouragement, with few of the formalities of an established religious organization. The ecclesia,* or church, was thus in its earliest form merely a communal assembly of believers. Such was the essential character of the apostolic community at Jerusalem, and of the earliest churches founded by Paul and his co-laborers. Their simple religious ceremonies were probably patterned upon those of the Jewish synagogue, but were originally less formal and elaborate than the synagogue services.

In these primitive assemblies, the apostles and immediate followers of Jesus at first had a certain

*Gr. ἐκκλησία, "the called," "the elect." In Athens, this term was applied to an assembly of citizens or freemen, summoned by the crier, for consultation upon matters of public import.

natural pre-eminence. As time passed, and the need for a complete organization became imperative, the older members of the various communities came to be looked up to for counsel and instruction. Each congregation finally had its council of presbyters* or elders, and these in turn chose one of their number as a presiding officer. In the earliest writings of the Fathers, the terms πρεσβύτερος, "elder," and ἐπίσκοπος,† "bishop," were used interchangeably, and indicated no division of offices or functions. The term διάκονος, or deacon,‡ was also used originally in precisely the same manner as were "elder" and "bishop." As found in the New Testament and earliest writings of the Fathers, these terms nowhere denote the division of the clergy into distinct orders, as in later times. Nothing like the modern episcopacy existed before the second century.

"The deacons," says Dean Stanley, "were the most original of these institutions, being invented, as it were, for the special emergency of the church at Jerusalem. The presbyters were the 'sheikhs' or elders,—those who by seniority had reached the first rank,—as in the Jewish synagogue. The bishops were the same, viewed under another aspect,—the 'inspectors,' the 'auditors,' of the Greek churches."§ The church organization is

* Gr. πρεσβύτερος, "elder."

† Literally, an overseer or watcher.

‡ Literally, a servant: from δία and κόνις, one who is dusty from running, or one who has to do with dust and dirt.

§ *Christian Institutions*,—by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster,—which see for an interesting account of the development of ecclesiastical ceremonies and sacraments.

thus seen to have been in its inception purely "congregational," or democratic, recognizing no pretended authority of a priestly or magical character, such as is involved in the dogma of the apostolic succession. Early in the second century, the ἐπίσκοπος, or bishop, was elevated above the elders and deacons, and concentrated many of their former functions into his own office and person. "He alone could baptize, consecrate, confirm, ordain, marry, preach, absolve."* There thus happened in the Christian communities what would occur in a club or society which should hand over the entire management of its affairs to a committee, which in turn should abdicate in favor of its chairman, so that he could say, "I, in my own person, am the association."

Before the conversion of the Roman Empire, bishops, presbyters, and deacons were chosen by a show of hands by the entire congregation. This, however, was largely a formality,—a survival of the primitive democracy of the earliest communities, the choice having previously been agreed upon by the council of elders. The entire proceeding was not unlike that of a ward caucus or political convention in our American cities. After being thus chosen, the bishops were ordained, either by the ceremony of breathing, which symbolized the transmission of the πνεῦμα, or Holy Spirit, as in the African churches; or by lifting up the hands in the Oriental form of benediction, as in the Eastern or Asiatic churches; or by touching the dead hand of the predecessor in office,

* *Christian Institutions.*

as in the Armenian church; or by the transmission of relics or the staff of office, as in the early Keltic churches; or by the imposition of hands, as in the Roman and later Protestant churches of the West. All these practices imply the survival of superstitions and fetichistic notions which originated in the primitive barbarism and ignorance of prehistoric times.

Growth of the Hierarchy. Importations from Paganism.

The limits of this discussion will not permit us to trace in detail the subsequent development and later modifications of the Christian hierarchy. With the establishment and temporal recognition of the Catholic Church came the fiction of apostolic succession, and the ultimate transfer to the Bishop of Rome of the title and paraphernalia of the emperor as *Pontifex Maximus*. The occasion of the papal establishment in the West was the retirement of the emperors to Constantinople, which ultimately involved the division of the Empire and the practical abdication on the part of the emperors of their assumed pontifical authority over the Roman Church. In the East, the powers which inhered in the emperor as *Pontifex Maximus* were transmitted to the imperial house of Russia, whose Czar, or *Cæsar*, is still the recognized head of the Oriental Church.

Many of the forms and paraphernalia of the Church are inheritances from the cultus and State ceremonials of pagan Rome. The cathedral, or church of the bishop, derives its name from the *cathedra*, or simple chair, at the head of the *tricli-*

nium, or Roman dining-hall, where the presiding elders of the earliest congregations were seated. The *sella gestatoria*, in which the pope is borne aloft in religious processions, is the ancient palanquin of Roman nobles and princes. The red slippers which he wears are the *campagines*, or red shoes, of the emperor. "The kiss," says Dean Stanley, "which the faithful impress upon those shoes is the descendant of the kiss first imprinted upon the foot of the Emperor Caligula, who imported it from Persia. The fans which go before him are the *punkahs* of the Eastern emperors, borrowed from Persia."* Christianity and heathendom are brought into startling and significant proximity in these inherited customs. On one side of the mate to the obelisk now standing in our Central Park—which eighteen hundred years ago was transported from Egypt to the Monte Citorio in Rome—is its original dedication by the *Pontifex Maximus*, Augustus Cæsar, to the sun; on the other, its re-dedication by the *Pontifex Maximus*, Pius VI., to Christ,—faithful type and symbol of the Church, in whose ritual and creed are mingled the inherited customs and traditions of the Aryan and the Semite, of pagan Rome and the simple ethical monotheism of Judea. Error and truth are both so firmly graven upon the ecclesiastical superstructure that they together testify to its natural growth out of the mind and heart of man.

* *Christian Institutions.* I have found Dean Stanley to be the most unbiassed and independent historian of the early Church, and am mainly indebted to him for the facts herein presented, though care has been taken to substantiate his statements by comparison with other writers on church history and with primitive documents now extant.

Conflict with Orientalism: The Gnostic Sects.

The first Christian century covers the period in Roman history from the time of Augustus to that of Trajan, including the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Nerva. Many of these reigns were of short duration, and the contact of the early emperors with infant Christianity was slight and unimportant. This period, however, was a notable one in the history of the growing faith. At this time, the conflict began between those tendencies and doctrines which subsequently became recognized as authentically representative of orthodox Christianity and certain opposing ideas and tendencies, mainly of Oriental origin, which threatened at one time to turn the thought and life of Christendom into other and entirely different channels. The chief of these conflicting tendencies was that known as Gnosticism. "Gnosticism," says Prof. Allen, "is a genuine and legitimate outgrowth of the same general movement of thought which shaped the Christian dogma."* The school of Marcion, and, less evidently, the other Gnostic sects, bore a direct relationship to that form of Hellenized Christianity which arose from the thought and instruction of Paul. Gnosticism was an honest attempt, by professing Christians, to solve the problem of the universe in accordance with an intellectual system, the materials of which it drew

* *Christian History.* By Joseph Henry Allen. For an account of Gnosticism, see also Baur, *History of the Church in the First Three Christian Centuries;* Milman, *History of Christianity* etc.

mainly from the dualistic Orientalism of Persia, and to a lesser degree, perhaps, from the philosophies of India and Egypt. It is not our purpose to present here any detailed account of the various Gnostic sects. A brief description of the general principles upon which their philosophy was founded is, however, necessary to a correct understanding of the attitude of primitive Christianity toward the Eastern philosophical systems and of the natural development of Christian dogma.

The complete dualistic separation of God—the Supreme Light and only perfect being—from the material universe was assumed as the philosophical basis of the Gnostic systems. To span this apparently impassable gulf and account for the creation of the world and the orderly government of the universe, the Gnostics had recourse to the Oriental theory of creation by emanation. From the Supreme Mind emanated a series of Æons, or "Eternals," the highest order of which proceeded directly from Deity himself; while the inferior orders were related logically and genetically to man and the material universe. These Æons were conceived as male and female, united in marriage, and thus transmitting by generation the creative force from God to matter and to man. In the system of Valentinus, Depth, or the Abyss, and Silence, or Thought, begat *Nous*, or Mind, and *Alethea*, or Truth. These in turn begat *Logos*, or Reason, and *Zoe*, or Life; and these gave birth to Man and *Ecclesia*, the Church or Ideal Society. The world in its present state, they argued, must have had a beginning. Time and circumstance must have had

a beginning also. Before them existed only the Infinite,—not indeed an infinite void, but an infinite *Pleroma*, or fulness, represented by the Æons. Man, by reason of his alliance with matter, was fallen from the high estate of a spiritual being. The Gnostic conception of the fall of man was, therefore, not ethical, but philosophical or metaphysical. Mind was degraded by contact with matter; and salvation, through the influence of the Æon, Christ, was regarded as the means of dissolving this temporary copartnership, of liberating the pure mind from its material associations.

Gnosticism, in its leading schools, was the complete antithesis of Judaism; and Yahweh, the God of the Jews, even became the Gnostic *demiourgos*, the creator and ruler of the evil material universe, the antagonist of the Supreme Mind, the true and only Deity. The man Jesus was wholly absorbed in the ideal Christ: his bodily appearance was a mere phantom; and the Christ, no longer regarded as a person, was represented as a universal cosmic principle rather than a principle of moral regeneration. Many of the Gnostic teachers were undoubtedly the intellectual superiors of their orthodox opponents, but in the character of their strength lay also the source and explanation of their weakness. The final downfall of Gnosticism as a part of the Christian system was a logical necessity. It broke the historical continuity of Christian development in separating itself entirely from Judaism, and severed also the logical continuity in subordinating the ethical element, supreme in the teaching of

Jesus, to a mystical and metaphysical philosophy which was foreign to his thought. In the second century, we find orthodox Christianity crystallizing its primitive dogmatic tendencies free from the metaphysical philosophy of Gnosticism, and "equally removed," says Dean Milman, "from its unmingled and unsullied original, the Judæo-Christianity of Palestine, of which the Ebionites appear to have been the last representatives." *

Judæo-Christianity: The Ebionites.

We have already had occasion to speak of the Ebionites as the recipients of the earliest Judæo-Christian tradition. We would err greatly, however, if we were to suppose that they adhered strictly to all the forms of ancient Judaism, or maintained its doctrine unalloyed and uncontaminated. Pharisaic Judaism and, still more, such sects as the Essenes had already assimilated much from Oriental sources; and Jewish Christianity resembled these later sects much more closely than the primitive faith of the Hebrews. From Oriental sources had come the later Messianic doctrines and the current millenarianism of the time,—the rite of baptism, and probably whatever is most noteworthy in the ascetic tendencies which some of the Jewish sects exhibited in common with many of the followers of Jesus. The Persian dualism had entered deeply into the doctrines of the Nazarenes and Ebionitic Christians. They regarded the present world as the kingdom of Satan,—as wholly corrupt and given over to

* *History of Christianity.*

the powers of evil. Out of this conception grew their characteristic doctrine of the blessedness of poverty. Those who enjoyed the wealth and luxuries of the present world, it was believed, would be deprived thereof in the kingdom of the future.

After the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Christian Church of the apostles removed in a body to the Batanea, near the Jordan River, where they continued their organization, and numbered among themselves the descendants of the family of Jesus. It is related that, during the reign of Domitian, the emperor, being informed of the existence of a family descended from the ancient Hebrew kings,—according to the then established tradition of the royal lineage of Jesus,—ordered them to be brought before him; but, on beholding their hands hardened with toil and their general appearance of poverty, he ceased to regard them as possible rivals, or insurrectionists against his authority, and permitted them to return unmolested to their homes.

The Ebionites, like the Essenes, were very abstemious in their habits, living, according to Epiphanius, entirely on a vegetarian diet. Clement of Alexandria confirms this tradition, and declares that the Apostle Matthew and James, the brother of Jesus, ate no meat. The Ebionites practised circumcision, and kept the Jewish Sabbath, the feasts of the new moon, and the passover. They celebrated the eucharist with unleavened bread, and with water instead of wine. They attached great importance to the

doctrine of angels, which the Jews had derived from the Persian angelology, and closely connected Christ with this order of supernatural beings. The community at Batanea continued to use the Syro-Chaldaic tongue, in common with the inhabitants of the region in which they dwelt. They made use of a primitive Gospel written in that language, which has been identified as the Gospel of the Hebrews. It contained no reference to the miraculous birth of Jesus, but directly affirmed his manhood, commencing with the assertion, as from the mouths of the apostles, "There was a man named Jesus, about thirty years old, who hath chosen us out."* The earliest generations of the Nazarenes, or Ebionitic Christians, wholly rejected the dogma of Christ's divinity. During the third and fourth centuries, however, some of their number appear to have assigned to him a unique and supernatural character, approaching the conception of a divine being.

The Legend of Simon Magus.

Among the earliest and most noteworthy Ebionitic documents are the pseudo-Clementine Homilies. Herein we have an account of the alleged contest between the Apostle Peter and one Simon Magus, or Simon the magician, who is represented as a sorcerer and teacher of false doctrines, who travelled through Europe and Asia Minor, claiming to be a Christian teacher, assuming to work miracles in the name of Christ, and even seeking

* See the compilation of extant fragments of this Gospel by Dr. Nicholson.

confirmation as an apostle at the hands of Peter and John. The Acts of the Apostles also mentions Simon Magus; and there is no doubt that this legend obtained general recognition among the Christians of the early part of the second century, though no mention of Simon is made in the secular history of the period, and his identity as an historical personage is more than problematical.

From the general character of the descriptions found in the Homilies and elsewhere, the rational investigator can hardly fail to be convinced with Baur* and other liberal scholars that Simon Magus is no other than an Ebionitic caricature of the Apostle Paul. Peter is made to pass over almost the exact route of Paul in his authentic journeyings in following Simon around to extirpate the seeds of heresy and dissension which he had sown among the churches. There is no historical evidence, however, that Peter ever went into Europe at all; and the entire story of the Homilies must be regarded in the light of a semi-historical romance. Beausobre terms Simon Magus "the hero of the romance of heresy"; and Dean Milman says of the Homilies, "That in their present form they are a kind of religious romance few will doubt." †

According to the story, Simon was accompanied in his wanderings by a beautiful but frail woman named Helena, who is doubtless nothing else than

* *History of the Church in the First Three Christian Centuries.* By Ferdinand Christian Baur.

† *History of Christianity*, vol. ii.

the personification of the Hellenic philosophy and influence so noticeable in the writings of Paul, and so demoralizing to the primitive doctrine of Jesus, according to the views of the Ebionites. In the following address to Simon, recorded in the Homilies, the allusion to Paul is plain and unmistakable: "Even though our Jesus appeared to thee in a vision, made himself known to thee, and talked with thee, he was wroth with thee as an adversary, and therefore spoke to thee through visions and dreams, or it may be through outward revelations; but can any man be commissioned to the office of teacher by a vision? And, if thou sayest it is possible, why did the teacher go about constantly for a whole year with men who were not dreaming, but awake? And how can we believe that he revealed himself to thee? How can he have appeared to thee, who hast opinions contrary to his doctrines? If thou really didst become an apostle by his appearing to thee and instructing thee for one hour, then expound his sayings, preach his doctrines, love his apostles, and dispute not with me who was with him! For thou hast striven against me as an adversary, against me, the strong rock, the foundation of the church!" How significant is this language in connection with the notable fact that Paul quotes but once the words of Jesus, and in connection also with his boast that he withstood Peter at Antioch "to his very face"!

Simon Magus is everywhere represented as a man of ecstatic, visionary experiences,—an admitted characteristic of Paul. He is said to have been

born in Samaria; and Epiphanius testifies to the existence of a similar traditional belief among the Ebionites in regard to Paul. The doctrines of Simon, as represented in the Homilies, are exaggerations, and often misrepresentations, of the Oriental and philosophical teachings of Paul. Simon is said to have called himself the first æon or emanation from the Deity,—a Gnostic conception, which is applied, not to Paul, but to Christ, in the Epistle to the Hebrews,—at the time when the Homilies were written, probably attributed to Paul. Simon is also represented as a believer in angels and demoniacal influences, and as making it his avowed object to emancipate mankind from these evil powers. Paul's dualism is exaggerated; and the Oriental doctrine of the evil nature of the material universe, found in the Pauline Epistles, is greatly intensified.

The conception of Simon Magus as an historical character once having gained a foothold among the traditions of the early Christians, many curious legends grew up concerning him; and his true character as identified with Paul was ultimately forgotten. To this day, he is usually deemed by orthodox theologians to be an historical personage; and some regard him as one of the founders of Gnosticism. There can be little doubt, however, that the theory of Baur presents the true explanation of the romance of the Homilies. Against the original "Simon Pure," in the person of Simon Peter, the writer set up this opposing picture of the false Simon, or Simon the magician, who, in his character of an attempted purchaser

of apostolic honors, becomes the originator of the ecclesiastical crime of simony. This is doubtless a slanderous accusation against Paul; and its only apparent historical foundation appears to be discovered in a circumstance every way honorable to him,—the fact that he raised and contributed money to the struggling church of Peter and the so-called "pillar" apostles at Jerusalem.*

Nero and the Earliest Christian Persecutions.

The Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, written probably about 68 A.D., shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and soon after the death of the Emperor Nero, is also a document of strong Judæo-Christian tendencies. Some of its obscure references to the circumstances of the period have doubtless been correctly interpreted by Renan and other critics of the liberal school. At the time of Nero occurred the most notable of the early persecutions of the Christians; though violent opposition to the new doctrine, regarded as a phase of Judaism, had already commenced during the reign of his predecessor, Claudius. At this time, dissensions had arisen in the Jewish colony at Rome; and, regarding the Christians as merely an insignificant sect of the Jews, Claudius had punished them all together with indiscriminate severity. The Jews were generally looked upon as atheists and contemners of the popular religion; and the Christians thus experienced the truth of the homely proverb, "Give a dog a bad name, and then hang him."

* Romans xv., 25-28.

The character of Nero, as preserved to us in history, is a most remarkable and detestable one. He was the traditional æsthete of his period. A scholar, proficient in both the Greek and Latin languages, a writer of poetry, and critic of no mean pretensions, he accepted the debased philosophy of the Epicureans, and gave to their conception of happiness as the ideal end of existence a purely selfish and sensuous interpretation. "In the strictly modern sense of culture," says Renan, "as distinguished from original philosophical speculation or scientific research, he was the most widely and exquisitely cultivated man that ever enjoyed an autocrat's opportunities for self-gratification." * In his later life, he was given over to the most unexampled exhibitions of luxury, mingled with cruelty and the grossest sensuality. While he lived, he was greatly admired, even by many among the cultivated classes. In accordance with the custom of the period, he received divine honors as an incarnate deity. "He was called Zeus, the liberator," says Tiele, "and even the saviour of the world." † Expiring, it is said, with a sentence of Homer on his lips, he left a name execrated by all succeeding generations.

The great fire at Rome in the year 64 A.D., which some of his contemporaries attributed to the act or command of Nero himself, was by him charged upon the Christians. Their identification with the hated Jews, the false interpretation of

* *The Antichrist.* By Ernest Renan.

† *History of Religion.* By Prof. Tiele, of the University of Leyden.

their publicly proclaimed doctrine of the speedy destruction of the world by fire, their isolation and avoidance of the public games and the popular worship of the gods, prepared the populace to believe the slander, and to rejoice in the acts of persecution which followed its promulgation. The refinements of cruelty resorted to by Nero at this time were previously unknown in communities claiming to be civilized, and are only equalled in history by the subsequent annals of the Christian inquisition. Some of the victims were crucified; others, clad in the skins of wild beasts, were torn in pieces by ferocious dogs in the presence of the populace; others, enveloped in sheets dipped in tar, oil, or resin, and bound to upright poles, served as torches to illuminate the scenes of these horrid festivities. These executions often took place in the imperial gardens; and Nero, in the garb and attitude of a gladiator, rode to and fro in the midst of the carnival of horrors, courting and receiving the popular applause. Mythological dramas, involving the death or torture of some hero, were represented not only "to the life," but even to the death of their actor-victims. "At the close of the performance," says Renan, "Mercury, with a red-hot iron rod, touched every corpse to see if it would stir; and masked lackeys, simulating Pluto or Orcus, dragged the dead out by their feet, smashing with mallets everything that betrayed signs of life." Not only Christians, but many other convicts and prisoners, were among the victims of this infamous emperor.

The Doctrine of the Antichrist.

Nero died by suicide at the private villa of Phaon, one of his courtiers. His corpse was not exposed to public recognition. It was even believed by some that the body of another was substituted for that of the emperor at the burial. The idea soon became prevalent that he still lived, had fled to Persia or the East, and would presently return at the head of a Parthian army, and resume his imperial sway. Such a conception easily took possession of the terrified objects of his persecution. To the Christians, he naturally and inevitably became the ideal opponent of Jesus,—the antichrist,—the incarnation of all that was sensuous and evil as opposed to the incarnation of all that was spiritual and good. The idea of the antichrist was a creation of Judaism during the period of the growth of the Messianic doctrine. Some writers even trace it back to the prophet Ezekiel. The incarnate representative of evil was identified with the person of Antiochus Epiphanes during the Maccabæan period, and is the "man of sin" of the Pauline Epistles.

The name "antichrist" is found in the New Testament only in the Epistles of John. The Apocalypse, however, is the book which especially presents Nero in this character. "If the Gospel is the book of Jesus," says Renan, "the Revelation is the book of Nero." In the description of the Apocalyptic visions, the name "Babylon" is evidently substituted for Rome; the beast with seven heads that rose out of the sea is the Roman Empire from Augustus to Otho; the fifth head is

Nero, the fifth Emperor, "wounded unto death." He was the one "who was, and is not, and is to be." He was the El Mahdi of that period,—the leader of the hosts of sin, whose return and temporary triumph would be the precursor of the advent of the heavenly kingdom. In the simple and superstitious expectation of the early Christians, he would soon reappear to inaugurate that interval of woe, calamity, and misfortune which, in the prophetic language of the gospel tradition, was to be the herald of the return of Jesus to reign over the saints upon the regenerated earth. "Thanks to the Apocalypse," says Renan, "Nero has for Christianity the importance of a second founder. His odious visage has become inseparable from the face of Jesus. Huger grown from age to age, the monster, sprung from the nightmare of the year 64, has become a fearful incubus on the Christian conscience, the sombre giant of the evening of the world. To this day, in Armenia the name of the Antichrist is Neron. In the seventeenth century, a folio of five hundred and fifty pages was composed upon his birth and education, his vices and his wishes, his perfumes and his women, his teachings, his miracles and his junketings." There is no doubt, however, that Nero was much more to Christianity than the new faith was to him. By him, it was little noticed, save at the moment when it served as the convenient means of turning from himself the odium of the populace, aroused by the incendiary conflagration at Rome. The Apostolic Period, on the whole, was favorable to the growth of Christianity, which

found in its own insignificance and obscurity the essential conditions of its early development.

Other Characteristics of Christian Thought in this Age.

In such an atmosphere of strange and fantastic ideas, we discover the Christians of the Apostolic Age. Surely, if there is much in their ways of thought and life, in their doctrine of human brotherhood and their generally pure morality, to give encouragement for the future, there was also much, upon a superficial view, to justify the denunciation of the new sect by Tacitus as "an execrable superstition." Clement of Rome, the venerated Father of the Church, writing at the close of the first century, relates the mythical story of the phœnix as a well-known fact of natural history, and uses it as an argument for the resurrection. Tertullian, a century later, was equally credulous. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas asserts that the hyena is male and female on alternate years. Belief in demons and demoniacal possession was a universal Christian delusion. The sun, moon, and stars were deemed to be living creatures. The lofty ethics and noble example of Jesus were already becoming obscured by puerile dogma, superstition, and ritualism. The triumph of Christianity, with these ideas predominant, seemed likely to extinguish the better elements in the primitive gospel tradition. The supernatural Christ—the incarnate Deity—was beginning to usurp the position of the Man of Nazareth in the minds of his followers. The subsequent history of the evo-

lution of the Roman hierarchy and of its secular triumph did much to justify the original gospel teaching of the blessedness of poverty and the unrighteousness of the mammon of this world. Yet, beneath all this incubus of puerile supernaturalism, the toiling poor in the Christian communities, little caring for disputes about dogma or subtle questions concerning the relation of the Son to the Father, held fast to the conception of Christ as the Good Shepherd, and clung to the hope, born of the gospel promises, that the day of their trial and suffering would soon pass away, and that the time would speedily come when all men should dwell as equals in the kingdom of the heavenly Father.

IX.

THE MARTYR PERIOD.

THE period in Roman history extending from the year 96 A.D. to the year 180 A.D. includes the reigns of the "five good emperors,"—Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. These emperors exercised, in the main, a mild and beneficent sway over their subjects. Their government was paternal and humane, inspired as it was by the lofty ethical precepts of the Stoic philosophy. The empire was at the height of its power and magnificence. If we may not accept in full the eulogy of Gibbon, we must at least admit that at no previous era in the history of the race had the condition of the masses of the people been so favorable to their prosperity and happiness.

In Christian history, this was the period during which probably all of our canonical Gospels were written. The Christian dogmas were beginning to assume their final and authoritative form. The Catholic, or orthodox, Church was separating itself from Gnosticism, on the one hand, and from Ebionism on the other. Controversies about doctrine led to the appearance of the early patristic literature. Ecclesiasticism was growing; and in oppo-

sition to the doctrinal tendencies of the time appeared Montanism, that fanatical protest against early ecclesiasticism, which aimed to restore the primitive democratic equality of the earliest Christian communities, and advocated a return to the simple faith of the fathers. Strangely, as it would seem, this period was also coincident with the earlier Christian persecutions: it was the heroic era in the history of the Church.

The Earliest Martyrs.—Growing Influence of the Church at Rome.

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, in the year 70 A.D., was an event of great significance to primitive Christianity. Thereafter, the Church of the apostles, dissevered from Judaism and the Temple worship, assumed a position of much less relative importance than it had heretofore maintained among the followers of the new faith. As the Church at Jerusalem receded from its foremost position, the Church at Rome came to the front, increasing steadily in power and influence. The Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, written probably in the last years of the first Christian century, already exhibits something of that spirit of paternal supervision and authority which was finally assumed by the bishop of Rome as the supreme pontiff.

Paul, not improbably, and Peter, according to a current though questionable tradition, had already suffered martyrdom at Rome during the reign of Nero. Their names were thus united in the popular mind, to strengthen the growing tendency to

throw a halo of superiority and supremacy around the Roman Church. The blood of these earliest martyrs became in very truth the seed of the Roman hierarchy. Shocking as was the barbarity of Nero's persecution, however, it can hardly be said to have been consciously aimed at the Christian religion. So insignificant were the Christians as a sect, that the emperor could not have foreseen any danger to the empire from the extension of their faith. Their very insignificance, indeed, and their identification in the popular mind with the despised Jews, appear to have been the occasions of their martyrdom. To the later reign of Domitian has been assigned the martyrdom of Flavius Clemens,—a Roman of wealth and rank, who had embraced the new religion,—on the charge of atheism, though the history of this occurrence is involved in obscurity; and his execution may have been due to political or social rather than to religious causes, his religion serving merely as a pretext to cover the real designs of the emperor. The martyrdom of John, the evangelist, has been assigned by some to the reign of Domitian. The accounts of this event, however, are wholly legendary and unreliable.

The Reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius.

As the new religion became more prominent, its universalizing tendencies were emphasized in opposition to the prevailing ethnical systems; and its uncompromising hostility to the popular *cultus* caused it to be regarded with growing disfavor by the government. The reigns of Trajan and Ha-

drian, however, were generally favorable to its expansion; and these wise and humane emperors cannot be charged with any deliberate persecution of its followers. The few instances of prosecution for religious causes during these reigns, based upon charges of denying the gods, failure to offer sacrifices, and holding secret meetings, or "illicit assemblies," were conducted under laws of the empire already existing, and originally promulgated without reference to Christianity or any particular form of religious faith. These prosecutions were instigated by popular clamor, and were local and unimportant in their character.

Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, who regarded the new religion as "a culpable and extravagant superstition," was forced by accusations brought under the laws of the empire to arrest, condemn, and execute certain Christians who refused to renounce their faith. He was not incited to this course by any special edict or command of the emperor, nor did he in any way exceed the mandates of existing laws. The celebrated rescript of Trajan, issued on receipt of despatches from Pliny concerning the prosecution of the Christians, appears to have been intended to favor and protect the accused rather than to urge on their persecutors. It required that punishment should only be inflicted according to the due forms of law, and ordained that opportunity should be offered for recantation and conformity to the law, which, if accepted, would be a sufficient defence against the prosecution. Dean Milman, an able and candid Christian historian, testifies to the forbearance of

Trajan and Hadrian as well as Pliny in their dealings with the Christians, declaring that "Trajan is absolved, at least by the almost general voice of antiquity, from the crime of persecuting the Christians," and asserting further that, "under a less candid governor than Pliny and an emperor less humane and dispassionate than Trajan, the exterminating sword of persecution would have been let loose, and a relentless and systematic edict for the suppression of Christianity would have hunted down its followers in every quarter of the empire."*

It is evident that the attacks on Christianity at this time originated with the ignorant and superstitious populace of certain localities, remote, usually, from the capital; and that, in so far as they received the sanction of the imperial government, they were instigated by no general desire to persecute or destroy. The Christians were still often confounded with the Jews, who, both in Palestine and in Mesopotamia, were manifesting signs of discontent and rebellion. A few years later, this rebellious spirit culminated in the insurrection of Bar-Cochba, in which many thousands of lives were sacrificed. This tended to inflame and augment the popular prejudice against both the Christians and the Jews.

The unyielding and fanatical temper of the Christians themselves undoubtedly helped to stimulate this spirit of persecution. Martyrdom was often counted as the greatest of blessings, and was regarded as a certain assurance of admission to

*Milman also says of an order of Hadrian reaffirming that of Trajan, The edict does credit to the humanity and wisdom of Hadrian.—*History of Christianity*, vol. ii.

the glories of the heavenly kingdom. In the correspondence of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, says Dean Milman, "there is throughout a wild eagerness for martyrdom.... He even deprecates the interference of his Christian friends in his behalf. He fears lest their ill-timed and, as he thinks, cruelly officious love might by some influence... deprive him of that glorious crown." The following passages from the Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans are illustrative of a spirit which prevailed very generally among the Christians of his time:—

I write to the churches, and I declare to all that willingly I die for God, if it be that you hinder me not. I beg of you do not become to me an unreasonable love. Let me be for the beasts, by whose means I am enabled to obtain God. I am God's wheat, and by the teeth of the beasts I am ground, that I may be found God's pure bread. Rather entreat kindly the beasts that they may be a grave for me, and leave nothing of my body.... Supplicate our Lord for me, that by these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God.... May I have to rejoice of the beasts prepared for me! And I pray that they may be found ready for me; and I will kindly entreat them quickly to devour me, and not, as they have done to some, being afraid of them, to keep from touching me. And, should they not be willing, I will force them.... Those who say "Martyr" to me scourge me. It is true that I desire to suffer, but I do not know if I am worthy.

The Gnostic heretics of this period were denounced by their orthodox opponents, not only for their errors of opinion upon dogmatic questions, but also for holding that martyrdom was unnecessary

and non-essential to salvation. The reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius, on the whole, were favorable to the growth of the new religion. The latter emperor both professed and practised in accordance with the humane maxim of Scipio, which asserted that he would rather save the life of a single citizen than cause the death of a thousand enemies. There is no reliable evidence of the persecution of the Christians during his reign; nor are there any notable instances of martyrdom, with the possible exception of Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, whose execution, however, is usually referred to the reign of his successor. The general voice, even of Christian antiquity, is favorable to the justice and tolerance of Antoninus Pius.*

Marcus Aurelius and the Persecution of the Christians.

The attitude of the great emperor, Marcus Aurelius, toward the Christian Church, has been severely and, as we think, unjustly attacked by Christian apologists and historians of recent times. A man of the purest personal character and loftiest religious sentiments,—accepting the exalted ethical principles of the Stoic philosophy,—it is difficult to conceive that he could deliberately persecute the adherents of any form of religion on account of their belief. "Marcus Aurelius," says Dr. Hedge, "standing midway between the first

* A writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* says of this emperor, "Instead of stirring up the persecutions of the Christians, and gloating over the sufferings of their martyrs, he extended to them the strong hand of his protection through all the empire."—Art. "Antoninus Pius."

appearance of Christianity and its civil enfranchisement, represents the high-water mark of Roman greatness, as he does the height of Imperial virtue in the annals of mankind. . . . Neither in St. Louis nor in English Alfred, to whom Merivale compares him, do I find the same piety, the moral sublimity, which I admire in the Roman sovereign." *

The character of Marcus Aurelius was moulded by a nature at once profoundly religious and intensely practical. Though a careful student of philosophy, holding his teachers in reverent regard, he never lost himself in the mazes of metaphysical speculation, or permitted his mind to fall into the profound pessimism of the Oriental mystics, with its resulting absorption from the affairs of practical life and despair of the future of humanity. His teaching was as universal and as practical as that of Paul. He professed, indeed, no belief in dogmas of a merely speculative character. His theology was, as nearly as possible, a sort of cosmic theism. "He saw clearly," says Renan, "that, where the Infinite is concerned, no formula is absolute. . . . He distinctly separated moral beauty from all theoretical theology. He allows duty to depend upon no metaphysical opinion of the First Cause." † Herein, Marcus Aurelius anticipated the rationalistic philosophies of Spinoza and Herbert Spencer. Very deeply religious, nevertheless, was his attitude toward that Unknowable Reality of which all phenomena are

* "Christianity in Conflict with Hellenism," by Frederic Henry Hedge, D.D., in *Unitarian Review.*
† *Marcus Aurelius.* By Ernest Renan.

dependent manifestations. "All that thou arrangest is suited to me, O Kosmos!" he says. "Nothing of that which comes from thee is premature or backward to me. I find my fruit in that which thy seasons bear, O Nature! From thee comes all. In thee is all: to thee all returns." * It may be said of Marcus Aurelius, as Carlyle once affirmed of Margaret Fuller:—He accepted the universe. He designated himself as "a man ready to quit life without regret"; yet he found in life more of good than of evil, and accepted whatever of care and trouble fell to his lot with manly resignation. "The character of Marcus," again says Dr. Hedge, "is revealed in his self-communings, which have come down to us, an imperishable volume,—the so-called *Meditations of the Emperor Antoninus*. Better preaching I have not found, nor thoughts more edifying, in any Christian writer of that time. A sombre spirit, but how sweet, how grand!"

There was about Marcus Aurelius nothing of the autocrat or tyrant. Though clothed with unlimited power, he used it all to promote and increase the liberties of his people. He recognized all men as possessing a common humanity with himself.† One day, he thus reproached himself: "Thou hast forgotten what holy relationship unites each man to the human race,—a relationship not of blood or of birth, but the participation

* *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.* See also *Selections*, "Wisdom Series." (Roberts Brothers.)

† "I have formed an ideal of the State," he says, "in which there is the same law for all, and equal rights and equal liberty of speech for all,—an empire where nothing is honored so much as the freedom of the citizens."

of the same intelligence. Thou hast forgotten that the rational faculty of each one is a god, derived from the Supreme Being."

Matthew Arnold says that Marcus Aurelius "is, perhaps, the most beautiful figure in history," and adds: "The great record for the outward life of a man who has left such a record of his inward aspirations . . . is the clear consenting voice of all his contemporaries—high and low, friend and enemy, Pagan and Christian—in praise of his sincerity, justice, and goodness." Niebuhr declares him to be "certainly the noblest character of his time"; and Renan closes his lecture before the Royal Academy with the following memorable words: "The religion of Marcus Aurelius is the absolute religion,—that which results from the simple fact of a high moral conscience placed face to face with the universe. It is of no race, neither of any country. No revolution, no change, no discovery, will have power to affect it."

It is, nevertheless, unhappily the fact that Christians were condemned under the laws of the empire, and upon some the penalty of death was inflicted, during the reign of this exemplary ruler. Even so candid and careful an historian as Dean Milman attributes to Marcus Aurelius the promulgation of an edict which repealed the acts of toleration granted by his predecessors, and opened anew the flood-gates of oppression and persecution. From the testimony of Watson, Renan, and other unbiassed historians, it appears, however, that this edict was issued for the protection rather than the persecution of the Christians, aim-

ing to renew the wise provisions of Trajan's rescript, which compelled a strict adherence to legal forms in the prosecution of alleged violators of the laws of the empire.

To this period is usually assigned the martyrdom of the venerable Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, whose calm dignity and patient endurance furnish so fine a picture in the annals of the martyrs. The *Martyrium* of Polycarp, however, can hardly be deemed with certainty a reliable historical record; though conservative historians have generally accepted it as a genuine document of the Smyrnian Church. Nor does it appear to be certain that the time of Polycarp's death is definitely assignable to the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Certain chronological notes appended to the *Martyrium* by a later writer than its unknown author would fix the date in the year 155 A.D., or some six years previous to the accession of the great Stoic emperor. At all events, there is no evidence that the emperor was directly or indirectly influential in promoting this act of persecution, or that he even knew of the event before its occurrence. "Polycarp," says Dean Milman, "closed the nameless train of Asiatic martyrs."

At Lyons and Vienne, however, on the borders of Gaul and Italy, a colony of Christian emigrants from Phrygia, in Asia Minor, in doctrine and customs akin to the Montanists, suffered, about the year 177, from an ebullition of popular fury, to which some of them fell victims. They were first assaulted with mob violence, beaten, stoned,

dragged helpless about the streets, and finally compelled through fear to remain in confinement within their own houses. The order for their arrest, issued by the authorities, was in reality an act of mercy, inasmuch as it protected them for the time from the violence of the mob. Their leaders were accused before the magistrates of the most odious crimes,—of incest, concubinage, banquets upon human flesh, and the grossest offences against decency and morality. They were convicted on the testimony of their heathen slaves, and hurried to execution. It is a fact of strange significance that the institution of slavery, tolerated, if not justified, by the Christian Fathers, thus early in the history of the Church appeared as an avenging Nemesis in retribution for the fatal inconsistency which ignored the fundamental ethical and social doctrines of the new religion, or feared to carry them to their logical conclusions in practice.

Even the more moderate of the non-Christian populace appear, at the time, to have believed these charges against the Christians, and to have consented to the execution of the condemned. In accordance with the practice of the time, many were subjected to horrible tortures. Some perished in loathsome dungeons, others by the customary modes of execution. Among the victims were Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne; a recent convert named Maturus; one Attalus, a Phrygian; and Pothinus, the aged bishop of Lyons. The most remarkable of the martyrs, however, was Blandina, a female slave, who, after suffering the most

horrible tortures unflinchingly, was thrice exposed to wild beasts in the public arena. At last, having been tossed by an infuriated bull, and terribly mutilated, she was despatched by the sword of an attendant gladiator. She bore all her sufferings with the most heroic endurance, steadfastly proclaiming, "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is practised among us."

It is the testimony of Watson* and other unbiassed and competent historians that the emperor was not aware of the proceedings at Lyons and Vienne until a considerable time after the commencement of the persecutions; and the only influence which he appears to have exerted subsequently was directed toward the protection of the accused from mob violence, by enforcing the provisions of the rescript of Trajan. The only instance of alleged persecution of the Christians at Rome is the condemnation and execution of Justin, the noted Christian apologist, with several of his companions. Justin had obtained unusual notoriety by his contests with Marcion and the Jew, Trypho, and had especially incurred the hostility of one Crescentius, a Cynic philosopher, with whom he had been involved in debate and controversy. By the machinations of Crescentius, he was accused before the tribunal of Rusticus, an imperial justice, tried, condemned, and executed. The emperor took no part in his prosecution, nor was there at any time any general persecution of the Church at Rome during this reign. On the contrary, the Christians were

* *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.* By Paul Barron Watson.

everywhere making their way to positions of trust and profit. They were enrolled among the imperial legions, and it is even asserted that they had obtained a foothold in the imperial household.*

On the whole, the reign of Marcus Aurelius was, to a marked degree, favorable to the progress of civilization, and not inimical to the advancement of the nobler phases of the Christian faith. The emperor instituted numerous reforms in the government and regulation of the empire. He elevated the position of woman, and mitigated the severity of the institution of slavery, instituting regulations favorable to the manumission and protection of the servile classes. The public charities founded by Nerva and Trajan were protected and extended under his influence. Free schools were established for the children of the poor. The gratuitous distribution of food to the needy was continued, under an improved system. An institution was opened for the care and assistance of poor young girls. Renan, speaking of Marcus Aurelius, declares, "His fortune was immense, but all employed for good."

The testimony of the most trustworthy among the early Christian writers should be conclusive as against the orthodox defamers of Marcus Aurelius. Tertullian, himself a Montanist, as, probably, were Blandina and the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, testifies as follows: "You will see that the princes who have been severe toward us

*Matthew Arnold asserts that "Marcus Aurelius incurs no moral reproach by having authorized the punishment of the Christians; he does not thereby become in the least what we mean by a *persecutor*."—Essay on Marcus Aurelius.

are those who have held to the honor of being our persecutors. On the contrary, all the princes who have respected divine and human laws include but one who persecuted the Christians. We can even name one of them who declared himself their protector,—the wise Marcus Aurelius. If he did not openly revoke the edicts against our brethren, he destroyed their power by the severe penalties against their accusers." We have also the unqualified statement of Origen, writing about the middle of the third century, that "the number of Christian martyrs was small and easy to be counted, God not permitting that all of this class of men should be exterminated." Watson, the most recent biographer of Marcus Aurelius, fixes the number of Christians who suffered death during his reign at about a hundred,* which is doubtless a liberal estimate.

Stoicism a Preparation for Christianity.

Reviewing the period of the Stoic emperors from the stand-point of comparative religion, we cannot doubt that the public recognition and general diffusion of the principles of Stoicism were strongly influential in preparing the way for the progress of Christianity. Reichel asserts of the post-Aristotelian period, in the development of philosophy, that "it supplied the scientific mould into which Christianity, in the early years of its growth, was cast, and bearing the shape of which it has come down to us.† While, on its dogmatic side, the influence of Platonism, and especially of the Neo-Platonic school of Alexandria, is predomi-

* *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.* By Paul Barron Watson.
† Oswald J. Reichel, B.C.L. and M.A., vicar of Sparsholt, Berks.

nant, on its social and ethical side, Stoicism was scarcely less influential. Both Stoicism and Neo-Platonism were products of the intermingling of Greek with Semitic thought, the latter even predominating in the direction and development of Stoicism. Zeller affirms that "the Stoic philosophy contains no feature of importance which we can pronounce with certainty to be taken from the popular faith. Even the true worship of God, according to their view, consists only in the mental effort to know God, and in a moral and pious life."* And again: "Even at Athens there were teachers, not a few, whose foreign extraction indicates the age of Hellenism. Next to the later Neo-Platonic school, this remark is of none more true than of the Stoic. With this fact we may always connect the world-citizenship of this school."† A recent writer in the *Nineteenth Century* has well stated the relation of Stoicism to Christianity, and of both to the pre-existing faiths. "The new tone of Greek ethical thought displayed in the rise of Stoicism," he says, "must have been due, according to our national-psychological stand-point, to some cross-fertilization by the ideas of a different race; and Sir Alexander Grant‡ has shown that all the eminent Stoics were of Semitic origin. The similarity which has struck most observers between Stoicism and Christianity receives its explanation from our present stand-point, when we remember that both were cross-fertilizations of Hellenism by Semitism. The

* *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, p. 343. By Dr. E. Zeller, professor at Heidelberg. † *Ibid.*, p. 35.
‡ *Aristotle's Ethics* (third edition), i., p. 307.

difference, too, may be due to the fact that, in one case, the less intense Semites were the missionaries, while Christianity was propagated by the fiery zeal of the Jews. The spread of Stoicism among the Romans cannot but have had some influence in preparing the way for Christianity."*

The Persecutions of Diocletian and Decius.

The emperors, from the reign of Marcus Aurelius to that of Decius (249–251 A.D.), if not friendly to Christianity, were at least indifferent to it. Elagabalus (218 A.D.), who assumed the manners and state of an Oriental despot, conceived the idea of a universal eclectic *cultus*, which should fuse the Jewish and Samaritan with the Pagan and Christian religions, with the sun as the supreme object of adoration, and the emperor as his earthly incarnation and representative,—a conception similar to that of Kuhn-Aten, the fourth Amen-hotep of Egypt. Alexander Severus (222–249 A.D.) carried his eclecticism so far that he enlarged the temples of Isis and Osiris, and enshrined in the palace as his household deities Orpheus, Abraham, Jesus, and Apollonius of Tyana. He awarded a piece of ground, the ownership of which was in dispute, to the Christians, for the alleged reason that it was better for it to be devoted to the worship of God in any form than to any profane or secular occupation.†

*"The God of Israel," by Joseph Jacobs, *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1879.

†The story of the alleged martyrdom of Vivia Perpetua and Felicitas in Northern Africa, during the reign of Septimius Severus, though usually accepted as historical, bears suggestions of its apocryphal character. The exact place of their martyrdom is uncertain; the testimony

During the reigns of Decius and Diocletian, a more general opposition was stirred up against Christianity than at any previous period. An attempt was made throughout the empire to suppress the churches, and prevent the further spread of the faith. Actual violence, however, appears to have been offered only to the bishops and leading ecclesiastics, while the humbler converts were seldom molested. Numbers of the clergy doubtless suffered imprisonment and death, exactly how many it is now impossible to determine. The occasion of these more general persecutions is doubtless to be discovered in the increasing claims of the new religion to exclusive recognition and universal supremacy,—claims which threatened to override, not only the ancient religion of the empire, but also its secular authority. Even Dean Milman refers it in part also to the relaxation of morals in the Christian communities, and the growth of the spirit of ecclesiastical domination, with its accompanying dissensions and jealousies.

Extent of the Persecutions.—Exaggeration of Later Historians.

In reviewing the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians under the empire from the stand-point of an impartial investigator of the historical evidence, the conclusion is unavoidable that the extent and enormity of these

of the *Acta Martyrum* is of doubtful authenticity; the very minutiæ of the recital suggest doubt of its reality; while the names "Eternal Life" (*Vivia Perpetua*) and "Happiness" (*Felicitas*) suggest an allegorical rather than an historical interpretation of the narrative.

acts of the Pagan emperors have been greatly exaggerated by Christian historians and apologists. Admitting that there is a substantial foundation for the charges of oppression, violence, and infliction of the penalty of death in many instances, these enormities sink into insignificance compared with those perpetrated by Christian authority in later times. Gibbon estimates the total number of the martyrs at about two thousand, and asserts that "the number of Protestants who were executed by the Spaniards during a single reign and in a single province far exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the space of three centuries of the Roman Empire." Niebuhr, whose candor and impartiality can hardly be doubted, confirms the opinion of Dodwell and other historians that the persecution of Galerius and Diocletian, generally affirmed to be the most general and disastrous of all, was a mere shadow compared with the persecution of the Protestants in the Netherlands by the Duke of Alva. According to Grotius, the number of Dutch martyrs was at least one hundred thousand. Motley says of these persecutions: "The barbarities committed amid the sack and ruin of those blazing and starving cities are almost beyond belief. Unborn infants were torn from the bodies of their living mothers, . . . and whole populations were burned and hacked to pieces by soldiers in every mode which cruelty in its wanton ingenuity could devise." The Spanish Inquisition, during the eighteen years of Torquemada, punished, according to the lowest estimate, one hundred and five thousand persons,

of whom eight thousand eight hundred were burnt alive.

The persecutions of the Jews of Spain and Russia by the Christians furnish examples of barbarity and wholesale slaughter, before which even the crimes of Nero pale into obscurity and insignificance. In Andalusia, two thousand Jews were executed, and seventeen thousand otherwise punished, in a single year. In our own day, the annals of Jewish persecution in Russia and Bulgaria compare in infamy with the recitals of the worst atrocities of the early Christian ages. Recollecting the treatment of the Indian and the negro in our own country, American Christians ought in all decency to refrain from slandering the memories of the dead Roman emperors. The Piegan massacre, in which an entire village of non-combatants—disabled old men, women, and little children—were put to the sword and fire,—an act to this day neither rebuked nor disavowed by the government,—closes our mouths forever from the indiscriminate censure and condemnation of Diocletian, Decius, and Marcus Aurelius.

General Causes of the Persecutions.

Bearing in mind the generally conceded policy of toleration toward alien religions which characterized the government of the Roman Empire, it is of great interest and importance to account for the apparent violation of this policy in the treatment of the Christians. The true explanation of the proven facts of the martyr period appears to lie largely in the character of the new religion

itself, and in a general and not unnatural misconception of some of its noteworthy customs, ideas, and dogmas on the part of the populace and those in authority. All the other religions which, with the growth of the empire, came in contact with the popular faith and attracted the attention of the government, were ethnic and limited in their sway, and did not aim at universal dominion. Hence, they were mutually tolerant within their respective spheres. Rome, as the capital of the empire, recognized and to some extent assimilated them. Judaism alone of the older faiths was intolerant, exclusive, and repelled recognition and assimilation. Christianity was never an ethnic religion: it aimed from the first at universal dominion. From its very nature, it could admit of no compromise with the idolatrous Paganism of the nations. It resolutely refused to be combined with other faiths, or assimilated into the eclectic *cultus* of the capital. It resented the tolerance and indifference of Rome with an intolerant demand for exclusive recognition.

Erecting no altars and offering no sacrifices, denying the very existence of the gods of Rome, meeting in secrecy, contrary to the laws of the empire, admitting none save those who had been united with them by the ordinance of baptism to participation in their worship, the Christians came to be regarded naturally and not without reason as inimical to the popular religion, and as a source of danger to the security of the State. Exaggerated reports concerning the character of their baptismal ceremony and their "love-feasts" not unnaturally

gave rise to popular suspicions of the general prevalence of immorality in the Christian communities. The New Testament Epistles and patristic writings contain abundant evidence that these suspicions were not wholly unwarranted. Paul's doctrine of a new life outside the sanctions of the law was doubtless as grievously misinterpreted in many instances as were the ethical precepts of Epicurus. This fact is conceded by able Christian writers. Prof. Lindsay, of Glasgow University, says: "In the Epistles of Paul, we find evidence that many of the Gentile Christians were even disposed to think of the new life of Christianity as one entirely outside the realm of ordinary moral law. This lawless or immoral tendency was strongly checked in the Christian Church, and only gained headway in the sects outside of it; but traces of the tendency are not infrequent."

In rightly estimating the circumstances of the period under consideration, however, we should not forget that there was no authoritative Church at this time,—no generally recognized *consensus* of Christian belief and practice,—but only as yet a number of distinct and unrelated communities, differing in customs and in doctrine, but all claiming the Christian name. Although the influence and authority of the Church at Rome were beginning to be recognized by a considerable portion of these communities, and the orthodox faith was endeavoring to clarify itself from the heresies of the sects, it yet lacked the power to enforce its authority; and, so far as the general public could see or understand, all the churches claiming the

name of Christian had an equal right to it. Some of the Gnostic sects were openly given to immoral practices. A system akin to Plato's proposed custom of "complex marriage" prevailed in certain communities claiming the Christian name; and we even have authentic testimony to the fact that a bishop held a view of the obligations of Christian hospitality which involved a practical recognition of this odious system.* Facts of this kind, though only occasionally coming to the surface, would naturally prejudice the people and their rulers against the entire body of Christian believers.

We have already alluded to the popular misconstruction of the doctrine of the approaching destruction of the world by fire, in connection with the conflagration at Rome, which served as the excuse for the persecutions of Nero. In a like manner, a misunderstanding of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist, conceived symbolically or actually as the body and blood of Christ, doubtless gave rise to the rumor that children were sacrificed and eaten at the secret evening repasts. It is noteworthy that a similar slanderous accusation has often been the occasion of Christian persecution of the Jews; and this belief still prevails among the ignorant people in Russia, Bulgaria, and the East.†

* *History of the Christian Church*, vol. iii. By Rev. Dr. Philip Schaff.

† "The Christianity which the emperors aimed at repressing was," says Matthew Arnold, "in their conception of it, something philosophically contemptible, politically subversive, and morally abominable. As men, they sincerely regarded it much as well-conditioned people among us regard Mormonism; as rulers, they regarded it much as liberal statesmen with us regard the Jesuits."—Essay on Marcus Aurelius.

The Montanists: Their Beliefs and Practices.

Many of the later martyrs were affiliated with the peculiar sect known as Montanists, from one Montanus, their founder, a native of Phrygia. This sect originated about the middle of the second century. Its doctrines were, in some respects, a survival—in others, an exaggeration and distortion —of the early Christian belief. The Montanists were, as nearly as possible, the exact counterparts of the Gnostics, against whose peculiar doctrines they uttered their severest protest. They believed in the continuance of the miraculous gifts said to have been possessed by Jesus and the apostles, in prophecy by supernatural inspiration, in ecstasy and "speaking with tongues," in prolonged fasting and other ascetic observances. In opposition to the growing power of the presbyters and bishops, they taught the doctrine, naturally drawn from the principles of Pharisaic Judaism, of a universal priesthood, in whose ranks they even included women. They saw in the ecstatic phenomena of hysteria the manifestations of a supernatural power. In some respects, the Montanists were prototypes of the modern Quakers, believing their "mediums" or prophets to be the immediate recipients of divine inspiration. They retained the primitive Christian anticipation of the early destruction of the world, and the return of Christ in glory to reign over a regenerated earth. In praying, "Thy kingdom come," they therefore prayed literally, as did Jesus and his disciples, for the end of the world. They exercised fanatical severity in discipline, requiring unmarried women

to go veiled, forbidding any to wear ornaments or any save the plainest and simplest clothing. They regarded marriage as merely a concession to the sensual nature of man, and forbade second marriages as adultery. They taught the impossibility of a second repentance, and the eternal punishment of the unregenerate. Tertullian, one of their chief representatives, held that there were seven mortal sins, which, if committed after baptism, were unpardonable, and doomed the sinner to eternal perdition.

These fanatical people, with their hysterical visions and ecstasies, their secret assemblies and social exclusiveness, their rigid asceticism and irrational millennarianism, were regarded by the populace very much as witches and professors of the "black art" were looked upon during the prevalence of the witchcraft delusion in Europe and America. The educated public sentiment of the time abhorred the professors of magic and sorcery; and, while not sufficiently comprehending the method of science to regard alleged supernatural phenomena as the result of fraud, delusion, or abnormal physical and nervous conditions, they assigned to them a significance and an origin wholly evil, and regarded their practitioners as worthy of condign punishment.

The Christian persecutions, therefore, were a natural consequence of ignorance, credulity, and superstition on both sides. While the Christians often suffered from unjust accusations, and, in the persons of their leaders, probably represented a higher standard of morality than that which

generally prevailed in corresponding social circles in Pagan society, on the other hand, individuals, and even entire congregations, were open to just charges of immorality and gross superstition. It is hardly to be wondered at that indignation, justly aroused against a few, should often expend itself upon those who were blameless. The new doctrine, but little understood, was sometimes condemned, in the persons of its most worthy defenders, for evils which appeared in the lives of some of its professors, even as free thought and rational religion in our own day often suffer unmerited odium, owing to the unworthy lives of some of their advocates.

Development of Christian Doctrine: Incarnation and Atonement.

During this period, two leading doctrines of the Christian faith took form, and finally became recognized as fundamental to the Christian system. These were the doctrines of the divine incarnation and atonement for sin by an expiatory sacrifice, involving the shedding of blood. The latter, prefigured in the ancient Hebrew faith, was no less also a doctrine of the popular Pagan religion. Personal mutilation, the sacrifice of animals, and even at times of human beings, characterized a certain phase in the development of nearly all the early religions of the world; and, accompanying these rites, we find the belief in their placating or atoning efficacy. One of these rites, often celebrated at this period, was the *taurobolium*, or

criobolium, a kind of baptism in the blood of a sacrificed bull or ram. In the performance of this rite, the worshipper stood naked beneath a perforated platform, and was drenched from head to foot in the blood of the slaughtered animal. This horrible experience was thought to be a certain ransom from all sin, and a pledge of happiness in the life to come. As the worshipper, reeking with the deluge of blood, passed out through the crowd, the people pressed around him to win some share, even by a touch of the atoning blood, in his salvation from the consequences of sin. The doctrine of salvation by the blood of Christ appropriately took form during the sanguinary period of the martyrs; and Origen even attributes a saving efficacy to the blood of the persecuted followers of the Nazarene, of a like character to that claimed for the blood of Christ.

The doctrine of the incarnation was never a Jewish belief, and was absorbed by Christianity directly from heathenism. "We have, then," says Prof. Allen, "in the mind of Paganism at this epoch, the two characteristic religious ideas of the age—incarnation and expiatory sacrifice—distinctly conceived and plainly developed. . . . The important thing to notice of them is *that they are the ideas of that age.* They are not peculiar to Christianity: it would be truer to say that, in origin and essence, they are rather Pagan than Christian. That they had a powerful effect in shaping the Christian belief there can be no doubt. At least, they predisposed the mind of the Roman

world to accept that belief so broadly and so easily as it did." *

Justin Martyr was one of the earliest of the Christian Fathers to place especial emphasis upon the doctrine of salvation by the blood of Christ. He also recognized the likeness of the Christian ceremony of the eucharist to certain heathen rites. In his First Apology, he says: "Of the food called by us Eucharist, no one is allowed to partake but him who believes the truth of our doctrines, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the forgiveness of sins and to regeneration, and who so lives as Christ has directed. For we do not receive them as ordinary food or ordinary drink; but as, by the word of God, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was made flesh, . . . so also the food which was blessed by the prayer of the Word which proceeded from him . . . is, we are taught, both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. . . . The same thing in the mysteries of Mithra, also, the evil demons initiated and caused to be done; for bread and a cup of water are placed in the mystic rites for one who is to be initiated, with the addition of certain words, as you know or may learn." In his dialogue with the Jew, Trypho, he adduces many alleged symbols of the blood of Christ from the Hebrew writings and ceremonials, arguing particularly from the expression, "washing his robe in the blood of the grape," which he connects with Jesus' Oriental and symbolical statement, "This is my blood," that Jesus could have had no human

* *Christian History*, vol. i. "The Mind of Paganism."

parentage, but was in fact the son of that God who made the grape and the vine.

The Christianity of this period, as well as the apostolic age, was deeply tainted with irrational superstitions. Justin Martyr was a firm believer in the active influence of demons in human affairs. Athenagoras, whom Dr. Jackson alleges to have been "the superior of all in his own age, in literary merit and broad philosophical culture," and who wrote "the best defence of the Christians of his age,"* alludes, as to an uncontradicted fact, to "the angels who have fallen from heaven and haunt the air and the earth, and are no longer able to rise to heavenly things, and the souls of giants who are the demons who wander about the world." Elsewhere, in the tone of the Persian dualism, he speaks of "the Prince of Matter, who exercises a control and management contrary to the good that is in God."

From the demonism and puerile superstition of the Christian Fathers, mingled though it is with powerful arguments for monotheism and against idolatry, and with injunctions for a higher purity of thought and life, we and the rational world will henceforth turn to the lofty ethics, the pure spirituality, the refined culture and noble life of Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic emperor, as to a well of refreshment after passing through a parched and barren desert. Surely, the closer we approach to the source of that religion under the influence of which we have been reared and nurtured, the more clearly do we perceive it to be no unique or

* *Christian Literature Primers.*

infallible system of thought and belief, but rather of like texture and character with all the other religions of the world. It is divine as they are divine,—as the world and all things therein are divine,—and no otherwise. It is human as they are human, fallible as they are fallible. It arose by a natural process of evolution out of pre-existing systems, to complete the overthrow of the prevailing though effete polytheistic *cultus*, and to supplement the narrowness and partialism of the decaying ethnic religions by the principles of universalism and human brotherhood. In the presence of its errors and its superstitions, and equally of the good that is in it, our conceit of Christian infallibility drops away, from very shame. We can doubt no longer that in every land and every faith may be traced, together with much human imperfection, the working of the Power Eternal that brings beauty from ashes, order from chaos, a nobler humanity from the conflicts of the ages, and in the future will evolve from the turmoil and contradictions of our present social order a new and yet diviner manhood.

In looking back, finally, over the period now under discussion, we cannot doubt that the sufferings and deaths of the Christian martyrs were powerfully instrumental in promoting and establishing the new religion. This, however, is a phenomenon not peculiar to any single form of faith. So has it always been since the world began. That cause, that opinion, for which people willingly give their lives, is ever on the road to triumph.

"The head that once was bowed to earth
 Up in the heavens now towers,
And the martyr of a former day
 Becomes the saint of ours.
While he who now, denounced and scorned,
 Speaks boldly for the right,
Shall in the glorious future shine
 A prophet, crowned with light.
.

"The Man rejected and despised
 Is worshipped and adored,
The felon scorned and crucified
 Becomes a glorious God;
And, bright with gold, that blood-stained cross,
 The emblem once of shame,
Raised high above all other signs,
 Exalts his blessed name.
And thus the truth,—the hated truth,—
 Each day still mightier grown,
Doth move the nations by its power,
 And make the world its own."

X.

CHRISTIANITY THE STATE RELIGION.

Divorce between the Popular Faith and Scholastic Theology.

THE student of the ethnic religions, in the earlier periods of their development, must often have noted the fact that their dogmatic and ritualistic peculiarities, as reported in their sacred literatures, are frequently artificial accretions—the speculative and formal productions of an established priesthood—rather than genuine presentations of the spontaneous and natural faith of the people. The beliefs and practices of the masses often have very little in common with the dogmas and ceremonies of the established religion. In India, for many generations, all save the priestly caste were forbidden the study of the Vedas; and recent investigations of able scholars, like Barth* and Haug,† would assign to these sacred writings a priestly rather than a popular origin. In China, Confucianism, with its remarkable freedom from supernaturalism and its pure morality, has always been the religion of the State and of the educated classes, far removed from the superstitions of the majority.

* *The Religions of India.* By A. Barth.
† *The Religion of the Parsis.*

Zoroastrianism was confessedly a religion of the priesthood. Buddhism has its esoteric philosophy, its refined system of metaphysics, remote from its popular dogmas and from the noble ethical teachings of its founder. Greece and Rome had their secret rites and doctrines for the few; while the many cultivated the religion of the domestic altar, and fed their religious natures upon superstitions such as are connected with all primitive animistic beliefs. The religion of Egypt also presents like phenomena. We may well pause a moment to inquire whether there are any evidences of a similar divorce of the thought of the educated few from the lives and opinions of the many in the history of primitive Christianity.

Testimony of the Patristic Literature.

If we were to look for evidence solely to the literature of the Fathers, we would discover no indications of such a divergence between the popular and scholastic beliefs. These writings present only one side of the question,—that of the dogmatic theologian. Here, we observe a steady tendency toward the condemnation and elimination of heresies, and the consolidation of that hierarchical system which finally triumphed in the supremacy of the Catholic Church. In Irenæus, writing during the last quarter of the second century, we find nearly all the Christian dogmas fully developed. The divine incarnation, the miraculous birth, the sacrificial eucharist regarded as the actual flesh and blood of Jesus, the belief in the second coming of Christ, the vicarious

atonement, apostolic succession, and the eternal punishment of unbelievers,—all these doctrines are plainly set forth in his writings. Origen, writing about the middle of the third century, did indeed suggest the possible salvation of all men; but his belief, borrowed probably from Oriental sources, was exceptional and heretical. The teachings of Christian scholars tended more and more to a consensus of agreement upon the principal articles of their faith. The supreme emphasis came to be placed upon "right belief," upon intellectual dogma, rather than upon the ethical quality of the daily life. In defence of these dogmas, the leaders of the Church were ready to anathematize and persecute the heretics of their own communion, or to offer up their lives as martyrs rather than accede to the demand of the State that they should renounce their creed, and offer sacrifice to the gods of Rome.

The Catacombs: their Significant Testimony.

It is, nevertheless, true that we have conclusive evidence that the belief of the majority was widely different from that which is revealed to us in Christian literature. As the Egyptian tombs, with their sculptures and paintings, testify to the habits and ideas of that ancient people, correcting the long prevalent opinion derived from their later theology that they were of a gloomy and ascetic disposition, so in the sculptures and mural paintings of the catacombs we discover the natural historical corrective of the one-sided evidence presented in the writings of the theologians.

The catacombs were subterranean places of

burial of great extent. From a single central hall, or chamber, radiated labyrinthine passages containing many places of sepulture, each of which, when occupied, was sealed up, and identified by mural paintings or sculptures and suitable inscriptions. This use of the catacombs by the Christians dated from the beginning of the second century, and continued until early in the fifth century. In their central halls and subterranean passages, also, for many generations, they were accustomed to meet secretly for religious purposes. Later, when there was no longer any need of secrecy connected with the ceremonials of burial and religious meetings, the catacombs fell into disuse; and from the sixth to the fourteenth century they were buried and forgotten. Even our modern historians have in general neglected to note the remarkable and invaluable testimony of the catacombs to the popular beliefs of the early Christian centuries.

This testimony, it will be observed, is contemporaneous with the period of the development of the dogmatic theology, with the contest of Christianity with Orientalism and the Gnostic heresies, and with the Christian martyrdoms; yet we find here few evidences that these circumstances and ideas materially affected the lives and thought of the masses of the people. A remarkable inscription at the entrance of the catacomb of St. Sebastian in Rome affirms, indeed, that one hundred and seventy-four thousand martyrs repose there in peace; but the absence of other corroborative testimony, and the conflicting evidence of the inscriptions on the tombs themselves, justify us in

regarding this as a theological exaggeration of a later period. All the Christians who died during the time of the persecutions appear to have been regarded subsequently as "martyrs," though they did not personally suffer the punishment of death. The estimate of Gibbon, referred to in our last lecture, is doubtless much nearer the truth of history than this pious exaggeration.*

Character of the Mural Paintings.

One familiar with the patristic literature is at once struck by the apparently incongruous fact that paintings and artistic representations are to be found at all upon Christian tombs of this period. The early Fathers of the Church almost without exception followed the Jewish prejudice, and condemned art as impious and sacrilegious. The general character of these burial-places is Jewish rather than Pagan, but the artistic development connected therewith is distinctively Pagan. "It is as if the popular sentiment had not only run counter to the popular theology," says Dean Stanley, "but had been actually ignorant of it."† The subjects of these artistic representations, though frequently drawn from Hebrew or Christian legends, are almost wholly ignored by contemporary Christian writers. The prevailing

*For an interesting account of the catacombs of the earlier period, see Stanley's *Christian Institutions;* for a general description, see also article "Catacombs," Encyclopædia Britannica, Milman's *History of Christianity,* etc. The inscription above alluded to was manifestly engraved after the catacomb had been fully occupied, and had fallen into disuse. Its use of the word "martyr" does not indicate that all or any considerable portion of the inmates suffered a violent death.

† *Christian Institutions.*

character of the early theological writings is arid, gloomy, and repelling; but the art of the earlier catacombs is uniformly cheerful and joyous. In the oldest mural paintings, we find neither the cross of the fifth and sixth centuries, nor the crucifix or crucifixion of the later Catholic period, nor the cypress, skeletons, and death's heads of a still more recent time. In the place of these "sad emblems of mortality," there are wreaths of roses, vines and clusters of grapes, winged genii, and playing children.

Of Old Testament subjects, we find representations of the creation, the salvation of Isaac from sacrifice, the stag panting for the water-brooks, Moses smiting the rock for water, Jonah and the whale, Jonah and the gourd, Daniel in the lions' den, the three children in the fiery furnace, and Susanna and the elders; of New Testament subjects, the raising of Lazarus, the adoration of the magi, the feeding of the multitude, Zaccheus in the sycamore tree, the healing of the paralytic, the washing of Pilate's hands, and the denial and seizing of Peter. A figure representing the deceased in the Oriental attitude of prayer, standing erect, with hands outstretched to receive the gifts of heaven, and with open eyes, is of very common occurrence. Even more perfect representations of this posture in adoration are found in heathen art of this period. The description of one of these might equally well be applied, says Dean Stanley, to the painting on the catacomb of St. Priscilla: "His eyes and arms are raised to heaven; perfect in humanity, beneath the lightsome vault of heaven he stands, and prays,

—no adoration with veiled eyes and muttering lips, no prostration with the putting off of sandals on holy ground, no genuflexion like the bending of a reed waving in the wind, but such as Iamus in the mid-waves of Alpheius might have prayed when he heard the voice of Phœbus calling to him, and promising to him the twofold gift of prophecy."* The conception of prayer herein typified, so different from that which pessimistic asceticism transmitted to us through the Roman hierarchy, is one among many evidences which the catacombs present to us of the close relation which the popular phase of primitive Christianity bore to the milder forms of Paganism in the midst of which it had its being.

Heathen and Christian Symbolism commingle.

Many of the decorations of the Christian tombs were borrowed directly from heathen sources. Here we find Orpheus playing on his harp to the beasts, the infant Bacchus represented as the god of the vintage, and the winged Psyche, symbol of the soul. The soul itself is often pictured escaping from the body in the form of a bird. Christian and heathen symbolism are frequently mingled in the same picture: *e.g.*, the Good Shepherd appears surrounded by the three Graces; Apollo with his pipes often seems to have served as the model for the gracious figure of the Man of Nazareth. More frequently than any other impersonation that of

*Quoted by Dean Stanley in *Christian Institutions*. Those who listened to the discourses of the eloquent Hindu, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, during his recent visit to this country, will remember that he assumed this Oriental posture during prayer.

the Good Shepherd appears in the paintings of the catacombs,—a graceful form in the bloom of youth, with pipe or crook, strikingly similar to the Hermes Kriophorus, "Mercury with the ram,"—a common figure in the heathen art of the time. Sometimes, he is represented as bearing a lamb in his arms. Once even, in defiance, not only of the orthodox dualism, but in apparent ignorance of the sharp distinction conveyed in words attributed to Jesus himself, instead of a lamb we find pictured a young goat, a kid. This incident, and the divorce which it indicates between the theology of the polemical writers and the simple beliefs of the people, are beautifully treated in the familiar poem of Matthew Arnold:—

"'He saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save';
So spake the fierce Tertullian.
But she sighed,
The infant Church. Of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from the Lord's yet recent grave,
And then she smiled, and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused, but heart inspired true,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew,
And on his shoulder not a lamb, but kid."

Inscriptions: Summary of the Evidence of the Catacombs.

The character of the earlier inscriptions of the catacombs harmonizes with their artistic symbolism. Of dogma, we find absolutely nothing. Of purely religious phrases, two notable expressions frequently recur: *In pace*, "In peace"; and *Vive in Deo*, "Live in God." Sometimes, we find *Vive in Bono*, "Live in the Good." Most frequent of all the inscriptions, however, are simple expressions of natural affection,

exhibiting no theological bias whatever: "My most sweet wife"; "My most dear husband"; "My well-deserving father and mother"; "My most sweet child"; "Innocent little lamb." In one place, we read that a husband and wife "lived together without any complaint or quarrel, without taking or giving offence." The simplicity of these inscriptions is evidence of a sincerity and truthfulness that it is to be feared are sometimes wanting in the elaborate eulogies of our modern churchyard literature. Of the heathen monuments of this period, Prof. Allen declares, "The inscriptions sometimes express a pious and humble trust in terms curiously like those of the Christian monuments."* In the presence of a great and impressive event, a common human nature stands revealed behind the masques of the most varying creeds.

To sum up this testimony of the early catacombs, it may be said that we find here no elaborate Christology, no deification of Jesus, no trinitarian dogma, no horror of eternal punishment, no theology even, save the simplest expression of theism. We find evidence of a Christianity scarcely differentiated from the surrounding Paganism, save in its disuse of polytheistic symbols; but little affected by theological controversies or state persecutions; cherishing gladly a simple trust in the leadership of that Good Shepherd in whose fold there was no distinction of birth, of riches, or of social position.

Differentiation of Christianity from Paganism.

There thus seem to be many points of agreement between the popular conception of Christianity

* *Christian History.* By Joseph Henry Allen.

and the contemporary Paganism, the chief difference, superficially noticeable, appearing to be that from the former all polytheistic implications were excluded. Wherein, then, shall we find the secret of their divergence? Wherein, the motive of the impulse which led the devotees of the new faith to forsake and contemn the old? What elements can we discover, held in common by all the Christian believers of this period, which will account for the rapid progress of the new religion, and for the general favor with which it was greeted by the common people?

Evidently, the distinguishing characteristics of the growing faith were not those of notable moral superiority. The careful student of this period can hardly fail to confirm the conclusion of Dr. Hedge, that the primitive Church did not aim primarily at good behavior. "Had this been the end," he declares, "there would have been a rapid and marked improvement in the morals of society. But no such improvement appears."* The admonitions of Paul and of the Fathers prove, on the contrary, that the worst of social conditions were not uncommon within the bosom of the Christian communities. That feature in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles which avoided conflict with the constituted authorities by inculcating the doctrine of non-resistance; which regarded a temporary submission to social injustices as preferable to active protest and forceful opposition, in view of the speedy destruction of the existing order of

* Article "Christianity in Conflict with Hellenism," in *Unitarian Review*. By Frederic Henry Hedge, D.D.

the world,—lent itself readily to the methods of designing theologians, and retarded the practical application of the ethical principles of the Gospels in the reorganization of society. One principle there was, however, which was so interwoven with the fundamental universalism of the new faith that it could not be kept wholly in abeyance,—the new and radical social doctrine of the equality of all men in the sight of God, the foundation of the Christian socialism of the Gospels, which was so mighty a power to bring hope and better promise for the future to the poor, the weary, and the heavy-laden. Where, if not in this new social doctrine, shall we look for the impulse which carried the new faith onward through this troubled period of its infancy to its final triumph? The practical communism of the earliest generations * was indeed modified by the necessities of living and laboring in the midst of an antagonistic social order, but the great hope for the future endured. The kingdom of heaven was yet anticipated upon a regenerated earth. Here and there, the new doc-

* "The early Christian communism was an expression of the essential spirit of original Christianity, not an accident, as many students of the Bible would have us believe. Other incidents of this story are unintelligible, except as they presuppose this curious state of things. In that dreadful legend of the early Christian community which is embodied in the Book of Acts, we find Peter exercising his supposed supernatural powers to strike dead Ananias and Sapphira for their lies. Apart from the miracle involved, the feeling of Peter is ethically incomprehensible, until we remember that their lying words covered actions which involved disloyalty to the fundamental institution of that early society. They had vowed their goods to the little Christian commune, and had kept back a part of the price. Their action was a fatal blow to the essential life of the community. Therefore, a singular manifestation of the effect of the first outpouring of the divine Spirit in the Christian Church was communism."—*Rev. R. Heber Newton, in discourse preached May* 24, 1885.

trine reacted upon existing social conditions, tending to reduce the barriers between classes and to improve the condition of the toiling poor. We may instance such evidences of this tendency as are presented in the story of one Hermas, a wealthy convert of the time of Trajan, who received baptism at an Easter festival, with his wife and children, and twelve hundred and fifty slaves, upon whom he subsequently bestowed their freedom, and gifts of money and property. One Chromatius, also, in the reign of Diocletian, is said to have had fourteen hundred slaves baptized with himself, after which they were emancipated.*

The new faith, sustained by the hope of the coming recognition of human brotherhood, presses onward to its secular triumph. We are now to follow it, under the lead of Constantine, its great protector, to the throne of the Cæsars. But, in this immense secular gain, how much is involved of loss, how much of this primitive simplicity, this freedom from dogmatism, this capacity for assimilating the better elements of the existing social order! The spirit of equality will retire yet further into obscurity, giving place to the rule of a despotic hierarchy. Heathen art, at first popularly welcomed to express the feelings of a

* One can hardly wonder that the poor were ready to make any change in their religion which promised to improve their social condition. This wholesale baptism of slaves, however, throws a curious light upon the methods by which Christianity was so rapidly extended. It recalls the story of an army officer during the War of the Rebellion, who, on hearing of the conversion of thirty men in a rival regiment, under the exhortations of a revivalist, not to be outdone, ordered his corporal to detail at once a file of *forty* men for baptism! The incidents above narrated are recorded in Dr. Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*.

common humanity, will be condemned and prohibited as impious. The Good Shepherd, the joyous and beautiful figure of the earliest Christian conception, will give place to the Man of Sorrows, "with marred visage." The "life in God," after the death of the body,—the peaceful rest for the weary,—will give way to the pictured horrors of eternal torment. Dogmatic theology, at last triumphant, will touch and blight even the lives and hopes of the common people. Slavery of the body will give place to a profounder enslavement and degradation of the intellect and reason,—a mental bondage for ages so complete that no Christian Epictetus shall arise to assert, "Although I am a slave, I also am a *man*." Europe, held in the iron embrace of an omnipotent ecclesiasticism, will hurry forward to the gloom of the Dark Ages

> "'Tis true 'tis pity,
> And pity 'tis 'tis true."

From Marcus Aurelius to Constantine.

The period from the time of Marcus Aurelius to the final secular triumph of Christianity under Constantine, though it included the era of persecution, was marked by a steady increase in the number of Christian communities, by a growing boldness of the polemical writers in defence of the new theology, and also by certain notable indications that the new faith was coming to be regarded as a possible factor of strength to the imperial government, in case it could be assimilated and directed to its support. For good or ill, Christianity had become a recognized political power.

It must either be systematically opposed and undermined, or accepted, and placed, if not above, at least upon an equality with the existing Pagan cultus. Considerations of state policy rather than of moral or religious principle appear to have actuated the successive wielders of the imperial power in their treatment of the growing faith. If any among them were influenced by higher motives than those of selfish aggrandizement, it was the great Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, and Julian, whom Christian prejudice has named "the Apostate," but whose attempt to revive and purify the Pagan religion appears to have been actuated by a sincere abhorrence of what he deemed the errors and superstitions of Christianity.* Neither Constantine nor those earlier emperors, who vouchsafed a *quasi*-recognition of the government to the new faith by attempting to fuse it with Paganism, give evidence of a tithe of the sincerity and high-minded patriotism which impartial history concedes to Marcus and to Julian.

The limits of this discussion forbid a detailed examination of the relations of the individual emperors to Christianity. We must hasten on to the period of its secular triumph. Maximin, the predecessor of Constantine and Maxentius, was a man of dissolute and tyrannical character, whose early attitude toward Christianity was that of a persecutor. He prohibited the Christians from meeting in the cemeteries and catacombs, as had long been their custom; he confiscated the prop-

* "The Emperor Julian's watchword was, 'The worship of the gods: no worship of dead men.'"—*Seeley, Roman Imperialism.*

erty of the churches, waged war with the Christian State of Armenia, and even atttempted to reorganize the Pagan religion upon the model of the Christian episcopacy. Toward the close of his life, however, he apparently became convinced, not indeed of the moral error, but more probably of the impolicy of this course of action. He issued an edict of toleration, and commanded a cessation of all violent methods of persecution, recommending only the milder measures of persuasion to win back the Christians to the faith of their fathers. His last imperial act was the promulgation of an edict which restored to the churches their confiscated property, and proclaimed complete liberty of conscience in matters of religion throughout the empire. The subsequent course of his successor was therefore no abrupt and revolutionary change in the policy of the government.

The Character and Attitude of Constantine.

The reign of Constantine witnessed the practical dissolution of the Roman Empire by the removal of the capital to the Bosphorus, and the secular triumph of Christianity. As a political leader, a ruler of men, a captain of armies, this emperor well merits the title of "the Great." As an exemplar of religion and morals, he better merits the title of "the Infamous." He shrunk from no crime which seemed requisite to the furtherance of his insatiable ambition. Upon his hands was the blood of the weak and innocent as well as of his enemies in war,—of his own flesh and

blood as well as of the stranger. "His father-in-law, his brother-in-law, Licinius, his own son, Crispus, his nephew, the son of Licinius, a boy eleven years old, and, lastly, his wife, Fausta, were his victims." Such a man could in no high or spiritual sense have been converted to the simple, childlike faith, the ideal socialistic system, of the Man of Nazareth. It was the mythical Christ, and not the human Jesus, the Prophet of Righteousness, who commanded his allegiance. If anything in Christian doctrine attracted his intellect, it was, doubtless, the convenient dogma of substitution and atonement, which appealed to his supreme egoism and selfish dread of that unknown future which the great emperor as well as the least of mankind was finally compelled to face. Not until the very close of his career, and upon his death-bed, did he profess repentance, and submit to Christian baptism,—an ordinance which, in the prevailing superstitious belief of the Christians, was efficacious in sweeping away the penalty of all previous sins.

Constantine's services to the Church were rendered while he was in the midst of his crimes, and before he had formally renounced the Paganism of which he continued to be the *Pontifex Maximus*,—the legal and recognized head and chief. The story of his conversion to Christianity by a miraculous vision of the cross appears to rest wholly upon his own testimony. An extreme exercise of charity might lead us to interpret this alleged experience as a subjective illusion, similar to Paul's vision of the resurrected

Jesus. More probably, however, it should be classed among pious frauds, and regarded as a pure invention of the emperor for the purpose of conciliating the Christians to his support.

Constantine's Eclecticism: His Recognition of Paganism.

Constantine founded a number of Christian churches in Rome, contributed to their support from the public revenues, and even set apart a basilica within the Lateran palace as a place for Christian worship. Side by side with these temples of the new religion, however, the worship of Cybele and the other Pagan deities continued unopposed even as late as the fifth century,—a hundred years after the recognition of Christianity by the empire. In Constantinople, the new capital, Constantine not only erected several Christian churches, but also a temple to Rhea, the mother of the gods, one to Castor and Pollux, and one to Tyche, the fortune of the city. Christian historians have claimed for him the credit of being the first to grant authoritative recognition of Sunday as the Sabbath, but the edict commanding its celebration makes no allusion to the day as a Christian institution. It was still devoted to the worship of the conquering solar deity. Apollo, Bacchus, Mithra, and Osiris had long received honor as incarnations of the sun-god. To these, the emperor, and apparently the popular sentiment, now added Jesus,—a circumstance the more natural owing to the fact that the popular Christian mythology, now fully developed, had drawn

many of its characteristic features from the solar *mythus*. The 25th of December was set apart as the birthday of the founder of Christianity; and the first day of the week became a holy day, devoted to his worship,—a common inheritance from the heathen cultus of the solar deity. About the same time that the public recognition of Sunday was made obligatory, Constantine issued orders to the haruspices to continue the heathen practice of divination on one or more notable occasions. He also placed the image of Apollo and the name of Jesus together on his coins.

The Worship of the Emperor authorized and continued by Constantine.

The worship of the Emperor, inaugurated by the Cæsars, still continued, and received new impetus and recognition at the hands of Constantine. He went further than any of his predecessors in providing for his own *post-mortem* adoration, ordaining that thereafter, annually, a golden statue of himself should be carried in solemn procession through the streets of Rome, and that every citizen, including the reigning emperor, should prostrate himself before it. "On the top of a monolith of porphyry," says Dr. Hedge, "he placed a statue of Apollo, rededicated to himself, with a halo of rays formed, it is said, of nails taken from the cross [of Jesus] which [the Empress] Helena had brought from Jerusalem. Between the nails, the inscription: 'To Constantine, shining like the sun, presiding over his city, an image of the new risen Sun of Right-

eousness.' This column, we are told, was long an object of formal worship to the Christians of Constantinople." * The adoration of the emperor as an incarnate deity was transmitted, together with the characteristic art of the early Church and many of the forms of primitive Christian worship, to the Oriental Church of our own day, the recognized head of which, the Czar of Russia, is still addressed by his subjects as "our God on earth." †

Sectarian Disputes: The Donatists and Circumcellions.

Tyrant, murderer, and patron of idolatry as was this so-called Christian emperor, this protector of the infant Church, he was excelled in cruelty and infinitely surpassed in bigotry by many of his Christian subjects. The African Church—fertile mother of an evil brood of irrational dogmas—became divided into two great sects, the Donatists and the Catholics. The former claimed to be the only elect people of Christ, the sole inheritors of apostolic succession. The latter stoutly resisted this exclusive claim. The battle of words soon culminated in appeals to physical force. When, by violence or artifice, the Donatists obtained possession of a church belonging to their opponents, they burned its altar, melted its cups, rebaptized all who desired to unite with their services, and even removed the

* Article in *Unitarian Review*, "Christianity in Conflict with Hellenism."

† For an interesting account of the Oriental Church, see Dean Stanley's *Lectures on the Eastern Church*.

bodies of dead Catholics from the common place of sepulture.* This feud ultimated in the most barbarous scenes of riot, massacre, and licentiousness, to which both parties contributed, and in which they gloried. The Donatists boasted of their martyrs: the Catholics testify to their own barbarities, appealing to the examples of Moses, Joshua, and Elijah, to justify the wholesale destruction of their opponents. Optatus, a Catholic bishop, exultingly cries, "Is the vengeance of God to be defrauded of its victims?" It is probable that more people perished in this earliest sectarian feud than the total number of Christian martyrs during the persecutions of the heathen emperors.

"Where Christianity has outstripped civilization," says Dean Milman, . . . "whether in the bosom of an old society or within the limits of a savage life, it becomes, in times of violent excitement, instead of a pacific principle to assuage, a new element of ungovernable strife."† The same able historian thus describes the African Christian of the period now under consideration: "Of his new religion he retained only the perverted language, or rather that of the Old Testament, with an implacable hatred of all hostile sects; a stern ascetic continence, which perpetually broke out into paroxysms of unbridled licentiousness; and a fanatic passion for martyrdom, which assumed the acts of a kind of methodical insanity."‡

The Circumcellions, another of these fanatical

* We are reminded of the present attitude of the Catholics toward those of other faiths,—an attitude which has often ultimated in acts almost as barbarous as those of the Donatists.

† *History of Christianity.* ‡ Ibid.

sects, asserted the theory of the civil equality of mankind; proclaimed the abolition of slavery; took the master from his chariot and placed the slave in his stead, compelling the master to walk by his side; declared all debts to be cancelled, and granted release to the debtors; and, in defence of these doctrines,—which, indeed, have no inconsiderable foundation in the literal teachings of Jesus,—they proclaimed a crusade against the existing order of society. Abandoning their accustomed duties as agricultural laborers, they attacked all who refused to be governed by their interpretation of the gospel teachings. Since Jesus forbade his disciples to use the sword, declaring that "they who take the sword shall perish by the sword," the Circumcellions took huge clubs for their weapons, with which they beat their enemies to death. Their communistic socialism resulted in habits of marital promiscuity and unbridled licentiousness. Their bands of marauders in the name of Christ were accompanied by troops of abandoned women, whom they called "sacred virgins." Their piratical leaders were denominated "captains of the saints." Some of these fanatical sects, of which we can here give but one or two specimen descriptions, were still powerful at the close of the sixth Christian century.

The Conflict of the Creeds: Arius and Athanasius.

During the reign of Constantine, the memorable theological conflict known as the Arian controversy culminated, and resulted in the formal proclamation of the doctrine of the Church concerning the

nature of Christ and his relationship to the Supreme Being. This controversy, which appealed exclusively to the metaphysics of theology, grew directly out of the doctrine of the Logos, first formally accepted as an essential feature in the Christian faith by the authoritative recognition of the Fourth Gospel, in the latter part of the second century. The term *Logos*, in the mystical philosophy of the Alexandrian neo-Platonists, represented an attribute rather than a person, an emanation from the supreme Deity rather than the generic inheritor of his personality. The Logos was often described figuratively as the "Son of God," while it remained in the mind of the metaphysician as an attribute co-eternal with God himself,—not *made* by him, but an eternal manifestation of his divine nature. An attribute is of course forever inseparable from its subject. The Christian theologians, however, treated the figurative expressions of this Oriental mysticism as they had treated the Orientalisms of Paul and Jesus. They personified the attribute, and identified the Logos, regarded as the Son of God, with the man Jesus; torturing the Hebrew phrase of the Gospels, originally descriptive of citizenship of the heavenly kingdom, the regenerated Jewish state, into a claim for a special and unique relationship between Jesus and the Father.*

The Logos in Christian teaching was *hyposta-*

* Ewald says of this term, "the Son of God": "With it, the reigning king of Israel could formerly be distinguished before all other members of the community of God ... It was first used, not to flatter the monarch, but in accordance with the strict idea of the true religion,—that, if all members of the community are children of God, elevated to this dignity by divine grace and education, and at the same time always called to remain faithful to this higher

sized; that is, as interpreted in the unyielding idiom of the Latin scholars, it was regarded as an independent *substance*, no longer merely as an attribute of God. In this rigid logic, this separate substance, endowed with personality, accredited with the affinity of sonship, could no longer be deemed co-eternal with the Father. Whether "first begotten," as announced by Philo, or "only begotten," as proclaimed in the Christian epic, it must have had a genesis and beginning. Yet it was admitted that *through all time* the Son and Father had dwelt together as separate and co-equal persons.

To the ordinary mind, here was an insoluble contradiction, but not so to the metaphysician. In his thought, time itself had had a beginning. Both the parties to the Arian controversy agreed that there was no *time* when the Father and Son did not dwell together as equal persons. Yet said Arius, a presbyter, "*There was* when the Son did not exist." The Father dwelt alone in that eternity which was before time began,—in that eternity which, in the cant of the current metaphysics, was not infinite duration, but the actual opposite or negation of duration.

Moreover, said Arius, if the Logos was born or created, it could not be "of the same substance" (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father, but could only be "of like substance" (ὁμοιούσιος). Around these two Greek words, differing in but a letter, and the

stage of life, then the true King of the community is destined above every one else to attain such an exaltation, in order that he, as standing nearer to God than any one else, may enjoy more fully his grace and protection, while at the same time, should he depart from God, he must feel his chastisement most directly and most severely."—*Ewald*, p. 114.

metaphysical notions which they represented, was waged the long and bitter battle of opposing theological factions,—a battle whose weapons were not always spiritual or even logical, and in which no place remained for the manifestation of the sweet graces of Christian charity and brotherly love. In such a controversy, we of the present day can have but little interest. If the arguments of Arius were enforced by a more unyielding logic, the doctrine and thought of his opponents were perhaps broader and more catholic than his; but the foundations of both parties rested in an arid waste of metaphysical speculation, as far removed as possible from the lofty ethical impulse which lay at the heart of the teaching of Jesus, and alienated from all rational conceptions of objective truth.

Constantine at first apparently sympathized with the doctrine of Arius, in which was implied the superiority of the Father to the Son, but subsequently threw the weight of his influence on the side of his great opponent, Athanasius, under whose leadership and inspiration the council of Nicæa finally formulated an authoritative statement of the orthodox belief in the following lucid terms :—

"*The Son is begotten from the substance of God, God begotten from God, light from light, very God from very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father.*" *

* For an interesting popular account of the Arian controversy, see *Christian History*, by Joseph Henry Allen. See also Milman's *History of Christianity*, Chadwick's *The Man Jesus*, Savage's *Talks about Jesus*, etc. For more elaborate explanations, see Neander, Mosheim, Baur, etc.

Constantine's Influence as Peace-maker.

During all these theological controversies, Constantine maintained the position of a pacificator, endeavoring to bring harmony out of discord, to consolidate the growing Church into a powerful and homogeneous body, and to make it the support and ally of the imperial throne. Doubtless, he saw in the rapidly growing hierarchy the germs of a power which, through its influence on the conscience and credulity of the people, would soon be able to make and destroy empires, to sustain or overthrow dynasties and kings. With a practical shrewdness which allied itself with the profoundest wisdom of state-craft, he seized upon all possible means to weld together the schismatic sects, and to bind the one holy and Catholic Church to the fortunes of the empire. He flattered the bishops, humbly claiming to be himself but as one of them; yet, in the councils of the Church, he was always the power behind and above the ecclesiastics, guiding their action according to his will.

The radical divorce between dogmatic theology and true religion, between a recognition of the formal observances of ecclesiasticism and that essential nobility of character which constitutes the supreme beauty and glory of manhood, was never more completely exemplified than in the character and example of Constantine. We may admire his statesmanship, his shrewdness, his ability as a ruler; but we must not permit our recognition of these traits, or his position as the first Christian emperor, to lead us to regard him as in any sense a worthy representative of natural morality or of true religion.

Early Councils. The Formation of the Canon.

The formation of the Christian Canon cannot be attributed to the influence of any single person or to the authority of any single council of the Church. Four men, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine, were chiefly instrumental in determining the selection of the books now deemed canonical and inspired; and several of the early councils indorsed and confirmed their selection. Of these four men, Irenæus was the earliest; and his influence was the most important. Writing more than a hundred years before the first œcumenical or general council of the Church, his methods were uncritical, and his decisions, in most instances, were purely arbitrary. Prof. Davidson says of Irenæus, Clement, and Tertullian: "The three Fathers of whom we are speaking had neither the ability nor inclination to examine the genesis of documents surrounded with an apostolic halo. No analysis of their authenticity or genuineness was seriously attempted.... Irenæus was credulous and blundering; Tertullian, passionate and one-sided; and Clement of Alexandria, imbued with the treasures of Greek wisdom, was mainly occupied with ecclesiastical ethics.... Their assertions show both ignorance and exaggeration." *

The first collection of Christian writings, however, was not formed by either of these distinguished Fathers of the Church, but by Marcion, who, for his Pauline and Gnostic tendencies, was

* *The Christian Canon*, by Samuel Davidson, D.D. See also abbreviated article by same author in Encyclopædia Britannica.

accounted a heretic. His collection contained one Gospel—not identical with either of our four canonical Gospels—and ten Epistles of Paul, which, however, he did not consider inspired or of divine authority. Irenæus arbitrarily selected our four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the First Epistle of John, and the Revelation. In an appendix, as of less authority, he placed the Second Epistle of John, the First of Peter, and the Shepherd of Hermas. He rejected absolutely the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second of Peter, the Third of John, Jude, and James. Clement of Alexandria, about 210 A.D., accepted all of our New Testament writings except the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second of John and Jude, which, together with the Revelation of Peter, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the First Epistle of Clement, he placed in an appendix, as of secondary importance. Tertullian, about ten years later, ignored the Second Epistle of Peter, the Third of John and James, and declared Hebrews, Jude, Second John, and First Peter not to be authoritative, ranking them with the apocryphal Shepherd of Hermas. Many early collections of the Christian writings omitted the Apocalypse, which is still ignored by the Eastern Church.

Besides numerous other fragmentary copies of the New Testament writings, there are four great manuscripts of the Greek Bible now extant. The *Codex Sinaiticus*, at St. Petersburg, probably the oldest of the four, dating, it is believed, from about the middle of the fourth century, contains not only

the canonical books of the New Testament, but also the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas, now deemed apocryphal. The *Codex Vaticanus*, at Rome, of but little later date, ends at Hebrews ix., 4, by mutilation. The *Codex Alexandrinus*, in the possession of the British Government at London, includes the two Epistles of Clement of Rome in the New Testament collection. The *Codex Ephraemi*, at Paris, is a palimpsest; *i.e.*, it is written over another writing, still partially legible. It agrees, in the main, with the other codices, but is of later date, and less perfect and reliable. The variations in these earliest extant collections of the New Testament writings attest the fact that no general and complete agreement has ever been reached respecting the books deemed canonical or authoritative.

The Council of Hippo, in Africa, in the year 393 A.D.,—Augustine being present as the ruling spirit,—declared the books of the Bible as at present published to be canonical, including the Old Testament Apocrypha, but omitting Lamentations. The Council of Carthage, four years later,—Augustine again being present,—confirmed this list, and ordered that no other books should be read in the churches under the title of "Sacred Scriptures." At a second Council of Carthage, A.D. 419, Augustine's selections were again ratified. There is nothing, however, in the action of these councils, or in the character of the men composing them, which would tend to sustain their authority as infallible or even reasonably just and intelligent. Dr. Philip Schaff, the orthodox historian of the Church,

says of the bishops who constituted these councils, "Together with abundant talents, attainments, and virtues, there were gathered also . . . ignorance, intrigues, and partisan passions, which had already been excited on all sides by long controversies preceding, and now met and arrayed themselves, as hostile armies for open combat." * Nor is this militant comparison a mere figure of speech, for violent brawls and unseemly physical conflicts were not uncommon at these convocations. At the first Council of Nicæa, Nicholas, bishop of Myra, met the arguments of Arius by bestowing upon the jaw of that venerable presbyter such a violent blow that a temporary disuse of that important organ of debate was rendered necessary. Of the third general council of the Church, held at Ephesus, Dr. Schaff declares that its proceedings were marked by "shameful intrigue, uncharitable lust of condemnation, and coarse violence of conduct."† Dean Milman affirms that "intrigue, injustice, violence, decisions on authority alone, and that the authority of a turbulent majority, decisions by wild acclamation rather than sober inquiry, detract from the reverence, and impugn the judgments . . . of the later councils." ‡ The impartial historian can hardly perceive any valid reason for exempting the earlier councils from the same judgment.

In the midst of such influences, civil and ecclesiastical, as we have described, were born the "infallible Church" of Catholic Christianity and the "infallible Bible" of Protestantism. When we reflect soberly upon this phenomenon, so extraordinary in

* *History of the Christian Church.* † Ibid.
‡ *History of Christianity.*

its alleged results, so human—not to say sometimes *inhuman*—in its means and methods, can we fail to conclude that there is not one particle of evidence to sustain the claims for infallibility made on behalf of either the Bible or the Church?

The Natural Evolution of Christianity.

We are now approaching the conclusion of this discussion; but, before we leave it for the consideration of matters of seemingly greater practical import, let us recall the leading features which have impressed themselves on our narrative of the historical evolution of Christianity, and draw from them such natural conclusions as we may concerning the genesis and development of the Christian faith.

The rise, progress, and triumph of Christianity constitute indeed one of the most remarkable phenomena in the world's history. We cannot wonder that an uncritical people, regarding it superficially, have seen in it evidences of supernatural intervention and the working of a greater than human power. A careful study of the development of other religions, however, will illustrate the truth that the rapid growth of Christianity, though indeed remarkable, is not an entirely unique phenomenon in history. The spread of Buddhism was even more rapid, not only in its native India, but also among peoples of alien race, unlike civilization, and different religion. It still numbers more adherents than all the sects of Christendom combined. In later times, the growth of Mohammedanism during the lifetime of its founder far surpassed the progress

made by Christianity in the earlier years of its existence.* In our own day and in the lifetime of some of its members, the Brahmo-Somaj of India has converted some hundreds of thousands of the native population to its pure theistic faith.

Many of the earliest converts to Christianity were drawn from the Jewish communities scattered among the cities of the Roman Empire. The dissolution of the Jewish commonwealth and the distribution of its people throughout the nations thus became a natural influence of notable import in favoring the spread of the Christian faith. The new religion, however, influenced but little the Judaism of Palestine; and the later accretion of myth and dogma imported into Christianity from Aryan and Egyptian sources speedily resulted in a separation of the Hebrew element, and cut short the progress of the growing faith among the people of its founder.

Jesus, the Myth and the Man.

It is insisted by the dogmatic defenders of Christianity, on the one hand, and by its dogmatic opponents, on the other, that the New Testament narratives must either be accepted as a whole—the supernatural and miraculous elements included—or rejected entirely as of no historical value. If we have been successful in our treatment of this important branch of our subject, however, it should be clear that, by the canons of a true historical and

* Dean Stanley, in his *Lectures on the Eastern Church*, in noting the spread of Mohammedanism in Africa, concedes to it some admirable features which are lacking in Oriental Christianity. His frank treatment of this subject is very suggestive and instructive.

critical exegesis, it is quite possible to separate the characteristics of the mythical Christ from the genuine features of the Man of Nazareth; and this, too, by the application of no arbitrary rule. Having recovered the picture of the historical Jesus from our investigation of the consenting testimony of the synoptical Gospels, and set over against it the remaining material of the Evangelical writers, the result proves the correctness of the method, almost with the certainty of mathematical demonstration.

On the one hand, we have Jesus, the Man,—a Hebrew of the Hebrews,—true son and successor of the prophets, finding his inspiration, his doctrines, his apt illustrations, his intense moral convictions, all latent in the ideas, the customs, surroundings, and even in the superstitions and prejudices of his people. His doctrine, like Paul's, was, "to the Greeks, foolishness"; but it was by no means unfamiliar or incomprehensible to the people of Galilee and Judea. His aphorisms, quotations, and illustrations show familiarity with the Hebrew scriptures and with the current uncritical methods of expounding and interpreting them in the synagogues, but none whatever with the literature and philosophy of Greece and Rome. The Jesus of the Triple Tradition is a simple, noble, manly personage, full of intense conviction and prophetic enthusiasm, who moves naturally and freely in his native Hebrew environment. The traces of the miraculous which still linger in his story are well-known superstitious belongings of his time and people. Jesus was conscience, humanity, compas-

sion incarnate, but conscience, humanity, and compassion tinged by the habitual atmosphere of Hebrew life and thought. Without the current Jewish expectation of a coming Messiah, and of the kingdom of heaven soon to be established on the earth, the historical Jesus of the Triple Tradition would have had no existence. That three or four Greek writers of a later century should invent such a character, living and moving in an atmosphere so foreign to any other imaginable environment, as some recent writers have suggested,—that, indeed, would be a miracle as difficult for the rigorous and vigorous apostles of iconoclastic radicalism to explain as are some of the legendary stories of the gospel narratives for their orthodox opponents.

On the other hand, when we pass from the man Jesus of the Triple Tradition to the Christ of the excluded birth-legends and the wonderful fabric of mysticism and dogma found in the Fourth Gospel, we pass out of the Hebrew environment into the region of Aryan and Egyptian thought. The Christian *mythus* finds its explanation in legends foreign and abhorrent to the Hebrew mind: in the similar myths which cluster about the story of Krishna in India, and which were reflected in the later traditions of Buddhism; in the like mythological conceptions of the Egyptian Osiris worship, and the current religions of Greece and Rome. Back of these, it rests upon a common substratum of solar mythology, which constituted so important an element in the religions of India, Persia, Greece, Rome, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt.

The Mythical Element as related to the Progress of Christianity.

To account for the marvellous progress of Christianity among the Aryan peoples of Europe, something more than the life and character of the historical Jesus is demanded by the rational investigator. That the mythical and philosophical accretions which gathered about his story in the gospel narratives helped to familiarize and popularize his teachings outside the boundaries of Judaism, there can scarcely be a doubt. This influence was greatly aided by the teaching of Paul, who in his own person combined Pharisaic Judaism with the results of Greek philosophical culture, and whose work was a preparation for the new Platonism of the Alexandrian schools, which drew into yet closer contact the alien faiths of Greece and Palestine. Finally, Paul's doctrine of Universalism severed Christianity from the ethnical narrowness of Judaism, and it fell as fruitful seed into a soil prepared by the political ferments succeeding the conquests of Alexander and the Cæsars,—into a world united as never before by the liberal and cosmopolitan policy of the Roman Empire.

Under the modifying influence of its mythical and dogmatic accretions, it is evident that the simple ethical teaching of Jesus was largely obscured and misinterpreted. There were three factors, however, in the evolution of Christianity, to which its progress and ultimate triumph appear to be chiefly due, that are traceable directly to the thought of Jesus, and that offer an historical justification for the popular regard in which he is

held as the founder of the new faith. These, taking them in the order of their development, were: first, that feature in the teaching of Jesus which based morality upon the inner motive rather than the outward act; secondly, the natural ultimation and practical application of this principle through the socialistic communism of primitive Christianity,* and particularly in the wider principle of Pauline Universalism; and, thirdly, the outcome and survival of this democratic and equalizing principle in the form of the church organization.

The abrogation of caste and of social distinctions in the church organization was the surviving remnant of the earlier communism, which not even the triumph of the Roman hierarchy could wholly obscure, though it succeeded in transforming the democratic equality of the earlier communities into the subordinated equality of the "Church militant," —of soldiers marching under the command of an autocratic leader. The organization of the Church was possible only through the principle of Universalism introduced by Paul, but based ultimately upon the thought of Jesus. The separate communities were welded together by the result of the dogmatic controversies, and the circumstances of the political situation, into a compact organization of workers, which gave Christianity a tremendous advantage in its conflict with heathenism. The ethnic religions, in their popular forms, were a matter of family interest rather than of organized,

* More than a year after these words were written, we are gratified to find our judgment confirmed in the able and scholarly address of Rev. Dr Heber Newton on "The Religious Aspect of Socialism." See *Index* of June 25, 1885.

concerted public action. They fostered no universal church. The state religion was usually quite different from the popular faith; and, while the schools of philosophy and secret and select associations of the mystagogues interested the intelligent classes, they did not appeal to the sympathies of the common people.

With this principle of organized Universalism in the primitive Christian faith, the tendency and policy of the Roman Empire coincided; and the Church accordingly took form and being under the guiding influence of the State. "The first form which Christianity assumed," says Tiele, "as an established religion, was Roman. The Roman Catholic Church is simply the Roman universal empire modified and consecrated by Christian ideas. It left the old forms, for the most part, standing; but it ennobled and elevated them by a new spirit. Its organization, and the efforts after unity which controlled all its development, were inherited from the Romans; and it was by their means that it was enabled to become the teacher of the still rude populations of the north, to preserve rather than diffuse the treasures which it had received from the ancients and from Jesus." *

Christianity and the Religion of the Future.

Looking back over the history of these earliest Christian centuries, is it wonderful, then, that the new religion gained steadily in power, and pressed forward to its ultimate triumph? Nay. The won-

* *The History of Religion*, by Prof. C. P. Tiele, of the University of Leyden.

der would have been had the event proved otherwise. At every step, we behold the inevitable results of easily discernible and wholly natural causes. Had the simple, unalloyed teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth prevailed throughout the empire, that indeed would have been a miracle. But Christianity triumphant, as we have seen, was far from being the religion of Jesus: it was a compromise with Pagan power and sacerdotalism,—a hybrid product which the Nazarene would never have recognized as the child of his simple enthusiasm for righteousness, his devotion and self-abnegation, his suffering and agony, his poverty and supreme self-sacrifice. Imperial Rome was not the kingdom of righteousness whose coming he desired and prophesied,—no, nor any nation, people, or religious communion which has succeeded it, owning or professing the name of Christian. His was a beautiful ideal, never to be completely realized, as he anticipated, by any earthly society; but let us not doubt that this rejected stone will yet take its place in the temple of the Religion of the Future,—the true religion of humanity,—which shall be neither exclusively Christian nor Buddhist, nor Mohammedan nor Hindu, which shall be known by no sectarian designation. Into its fold shall be welcomed all sincere and earnest seekers for the truth; all who strive for its manifestation in a life of righteousness; all who believe, in the language of one of its prophets, that "Truth is our only armor in all passages of life and death." Its blessed ministry shall lead them, and lead all the world at last, to a perfect recognition of the BROTH-

ERHOOD OF MAN; and to that trustful acceptance of the universe, which, independent even of theistic dogma, stands to all reverent and thoughtful minds as the rational fulfilment of Jesus' doctrine of the FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

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ERRATA.

On page 23, first line, and in note, *Kabala* is more frequently spelled with but one *b*, though the other method conforms more closely to the Hebrew orthography.

On page 44, fifteenth line from top, read Aaklēpios instead of Asklĕpios.

On page 71, fourteenth line from top, insert "as" after "old."

On page 80, thirteenth line from top, for "other" read "others."

On page 91, sixth line from bottom, for "Bythinia" read "Bithynia."

On page 148, third line from bottom, for "Alexander Severus" read "Septimius Severus."

On page 150, second line in first note, for "Tyænus" read "Tyanæus"; also on page 156, first line in second note.

On page 154, twelfth line from top, for "Ennapius" read "Eunapius."

On page 169, twelfth line from top, for "would" read "should."

On page 215, in first note, supply accent in "τρεσβύτερος."

On page 249, third line from bottom, insert quotation-marks after "us."

A recent "Critico-Historical Sketch of the Druids," from the able pen of William Emmette Coleman (*Religio-Philosophical Journal*, Oct. 10, 17, 24, 1885), appears, justly, to discredit much which has been generally received as truth concerning them, on the authority of Cæsar, Pliny, and other classical writers. The account of the Druids herein contained (pp. 62, 63) follows, temperately, the generally received authorities, but perhaps requires some further modification.